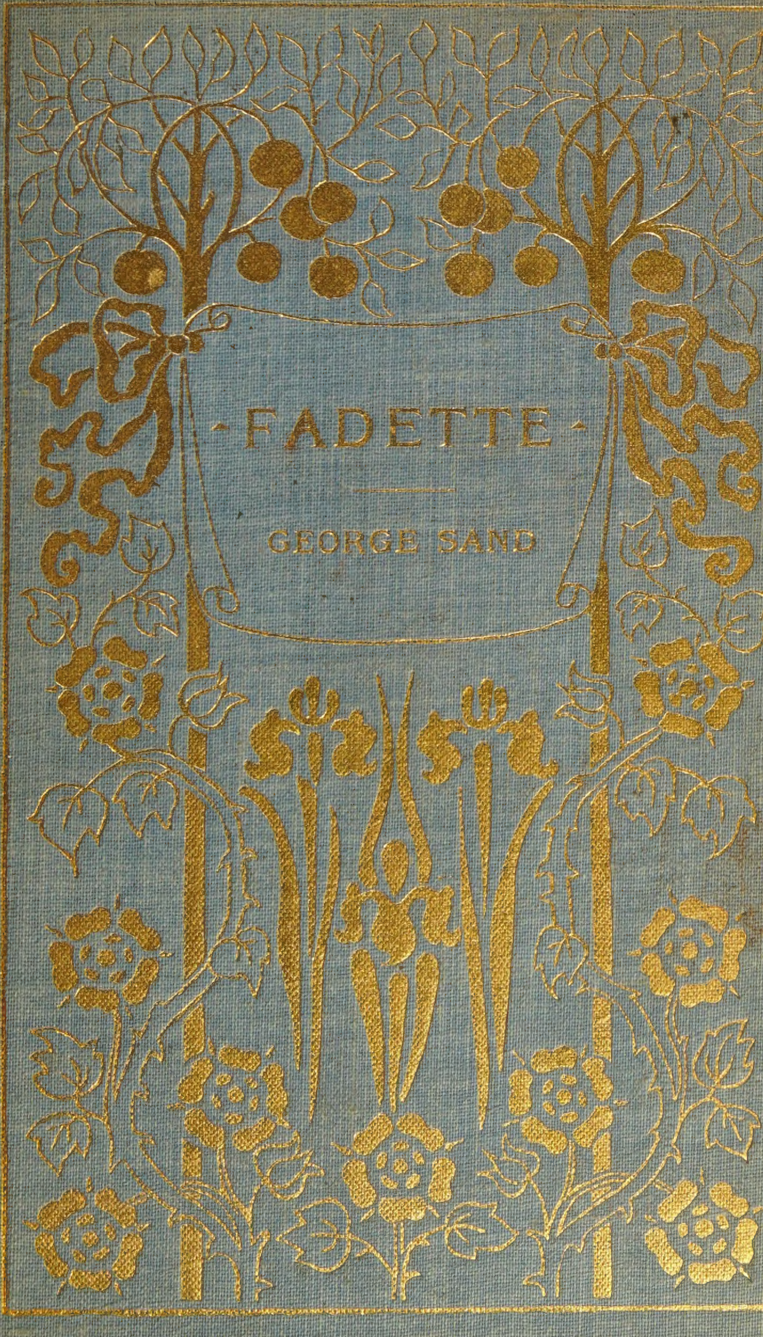

FADETTE

GEORGE SAND

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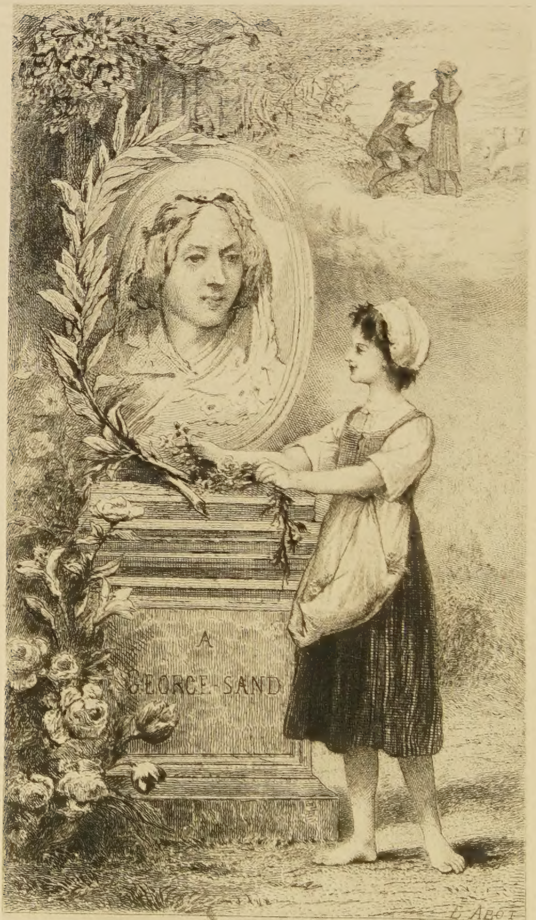
FADETTE


A
GEORGE-SAND
E. ABOT

E. Abot Inv. & sculp.

FADETTE

(LA PETITE FADETTE)

BY

GEORGE SAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

JANE MINOT SEDGWICK

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WITH AN ETCHING BY E. ABOT

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, & CO.
1899

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PREFACE

IT was after the terrible days of June, 1848, that, troubled and overwhelmed to the bottom of my soul by the storms from without, I tried to find again in solitude, if not calm, at least faith. If I professed to be a philosopher, I might believe or pretend that belief in ideas brings peace of mind in presence of the disastrous facts of contemporary history; but it is not at all so with me, and I humbly confess that the certainty of a future ordered by Providence could not bar the way, in the soul of an artist, to the grief of passing through a present darkened and torn by civil war.

For men of action, who take a personal part in politics, there is everywhere, under all circumstances, a fever of hope or anguish, rage or joy, the intoxication of triumph, or the wrath of defeat. But for the poor poet and for the idle woman, who watch events without having any direct and personal interest, be the issue of the struggle what it may, there is a deep horror of the blood spilled on either side, and a kind of despair at the sight of the hatred, wrongs, threats, and calumnies which mount toward heaven like an unclean holocaust in the train of social convulsions.

At such a moment as this, a genius stormy and strong as Dante, writes with his tears, his gall, his nerves, a terrible poem, a drama all full of torments and of groans. We must be tempered like that soul of iron and fire, to fix our imagination upon the horrors of a symbolic hell, when we have under our eyes the dolorous purgatory of desolation upon earth. The artist of our times, more feeble and sensitive, who is but the reflection and the echo of a generation very like him, feels the imperative need of looking away, and of diverting his imagination, by turning toward an ideal of peace, of innocence, and of contemplation. It is his weakness that makes him do so, but he has no cause to blush for it, because it is also his duty. In times when evil comes because men misunderstand and hate one another, it is the mission of the artist to praise sweetness, confidence, and friendship, and so to remind men, hardened or discouraged, that pure morals, tender sentiments, and primitive justice still exist, or at least can exist, in this world. Direct allusions to present ills, the appeal to boiling passions,—

there is no road to safety there: a sweet song, the sound of a rustic pipe, a story to put little children to sleep without fear or pain, is better than the spectacle of real evils deepened and darkened still more by the colors of fiction.

Preaching unity to men who are cutting one another's throats, is crying in the wilderness. There are times when souls are so agitated that they are deaf to every direct appeal. Since those June days of which present events are the inevitable consequence, the author of the story that you are going to read has undertaken the task of being *amiable* though he should die of chagrin. He has let his pastorals be laughed at, as he had let everything else be laughed at, without troubling himself at the judgments of a certain kind of criticism. He knows that he has given pleasure to those who love that strain, and that to give pleasure to them that suffer from the same ill as he, in knowing the horror of hate and of revenge, is to do them all the good that they can receive: very fleeting, a passing relief, it is true, but more real than a passionate declamation, and more impressive than a classical demonstration.

George Sand.

Nohant, the twenty-first of December, 1851.

FADETTE

CHAPTER I

FATHER BARBEAU, of Cosse, was certainly comfortably off, for he was a member of the municipal board of his township. His two fields provided for the support of his family and yielded him profit besides. He cut full cart-loads of hay in his meadows, and except what came from the borders of the brook and was somewhat injured by the rushes, it was known as the best fodder in the neighborhood.

Father Barbeau's house was roofed with tiles, and built high on a hillside where the air was good. It had a fruitful garden, and a vineyard six acres in extent.

Then, behind his barn, he had a fine orchard, such as we call an *ouche*, where plums, cherries, pears, and sorb-apples grew in equal profusion. Even the nut-trees in his hedge-rows were the oldest and largest for two leagues around.

Father Barbeau was a cheerful and a good-humored man, very fond of his family, without neglecting the interests of his neighbors and fellow-parishioners.

He had three children already, when Mother Barbeau, who knew their means were enough for five, and that her advancing years gave her little time, determined to present him with two fine boys at once. They looked so much like each other that it was almost impossible to distinguish them, and they were recognized as *bessons*,—that is to say, twins exactly alike.

Mother Sagette, who received them in her apron when they came into the world, did not forget to make a little cross with her needle on the arm of the first-born, because, as she used to say, "one can make a mistake about a bit of ribbon or a necklace, and the birthright may be lost."

"When the child grows stronger," she went on, "we must mark him with a sign that will never rub off"; and this they did not fail to do. The elder was named Sylvain, which soon became Sylvinet, to distinguish him from his eldest brother, who had acted as his godfather; and the younger was called Landry, and kept the name as he had received it in baptism, because his uncle, who was his godfather, had always, from his youth up, been called Landriche.

Father Barbeau was a little astonished, when he came back from market, to see two tiny heads in the cradle.

"Oh! oh!" cried he, "that cradle is too narrow. To-morrow morning I must make it larger."

He was something of a carpenter, and though he had never learned the trade, he had made half his furniture himself. He showed no further surprise, and went to look after his wife, who drank a large glass of hot wine, and felt the better for it.

"You do so much, wife," he said to her, "that I should take courage from you. Here are two more children to feed, though we did not need them at all. That means that I must keep on cultivating our land and raising our cattle. Don't worry, I shall work; but don't give me three the next time, for that would be too many."

Mother Barbeau began to cry, and Father Barbeau was very sorry. "Come, come," said he, "you must not fret, my good wife. I did not say that to reproach you; I only meant to thank you. Those two are fine, well-made children; there is not a defect on their bodies, and I am very well pleased."

"Oh, dear me," said his wife; "I know, master, very well that you are not finding fault with me for the children; but I am worried because I have heard that nothing is more uncertain and difficult to bring up than twins. They interfere with each other, and if one is to be healthy, the other generally dies."

"Really," said the father; "is that so? As far as I know, these are the first twins that I have ever seen. They do not come often. But here is Mother Sagette, who knows and will tell us all about it." So he called Mother Sagette, who answered: "Trust me, those twins will get on perfectly well, and will be just as healthy as other children. I have been a nurse for fifty years, and have seen all the children in the country round born, and live or die; so it is not the first time that I have assisted at the birth of twins. In the first place, they are none the worse for looking alike. Sometimes they have no more resemblance than you and I, and yet one is strong and the other delicate; so one lives and the other dies. But look at yours! Each one is as fine and well made as if he were an only child. They cannot have done each other any harm before their birth, and they have come into the world without too much pain to their mother or hurt to themselves. They are wonderfully pretty, and mean to live. So take heart, Mother Barbeau; it will be a great pleasure for you to see them grow up. If they live, you alone, and those who see them every day, will be able to tell the difference between them, for I never saw twins so much alike. You might call them two little partridges hatching from the same egg. They are so sweet and so much like each other, that only the mother partridge can distinguish them."

"Good!" exclaimed Father Barbeau, scratching his head. "But I have heard that twins sometimes grow so fond of each other, that when they are separated they can live no longer, and one, at least, lets himself pine away till he dies of grief."

"That is perfectly true," said Mother Sagette; "but listen to what an experienced woman is going to tell you. Do not forget it, for when your children are old enough to leave you, perhaps I shall not be in the world to advise you. As soon as the twins begin to know each other, be careful not to leave them always together. Take one out to work, while the other is looking after the house. When one goes fishing, send the other hunting; when one is tending sheep, let the other one take care of the cows in pasture; when you give one wine to drink, give the other a glass of water; and so on. Don't scold them or correct them at the same time. Don't dress them alike: when one has a hat, let the other have a cap; and above all, don't let their blouses be the same blue. In short, in every way that you can think of, prevent them from becoming too much alike, and teach them to learn to do without each other. I am very much afraid that you will turn a deaf ear to what I am saying to you; but if you do, you will be very sorry for it some day."

Mother Sagette's words were gold, and they believed her. They promised to do as she said, and they made her a handsome present before they let her go. Then, as she had strongly advised that the twins should not be fed with the same milk, they set about looking up a nurse at once.

But there was not one to be found in the place. Mother Barbeau, who had not counted upon two children, and who had nursed all the others herself, had taken no precautions beforehand. Father Barbeau was obliged to go off in search of a nurse in the neighborhood. While he was gone, the mother could not allow her children to suffer, and so she fed both from her own breast.

Our country people do not decide in a hurry, and no matter how rich they may be, they must always do a little bargaining. It was known that the Barbeau family could afford to pay, and people thought that as the mother was no longer in her first youth, she could not nurse two babies without injury to her health. So all the nurses whom Father Barbeau could find, asked him eighteen francs a month,— neither more nor less than they would have asked a *bourgeois*.

Father Barbeau did not care to give more than twelve or fifteen francs, thinking that a great deal for a peasant. He tried everywhere, and haggled a little, without concluding a bargain. The matter was not very pressing; for two such young children could not exhaust their mother, and they were both so healthy, so quiet, and cried so little, that they made scarcely more disturbance in the house than a single child. When one slept, the other slept too. Their father had arranged the cradle, and when they both cried at once, they were both rocked and soothed at the same time.

Finally Father Barbeau struck a bargain with a nurse for fifteen francs, and the only difficulty lay in the gratuity of a hundred sous, when his wife said to him:

"Nonsense, master! I see no reason for spending a hundred and eighty to two hundred francs a year, as if we were gentlemen and ladies, and as if I were too old to nurse my own children. I have more milk than they need. Our boys are a month old already, and just see how they thrive! The nurse Merlaude, whom you want for one of them, is not half so strong or healthy as I am; her milk is already eighteen months old, and will not do for such a young child. Mother Sagette told us not to give our twins the same milk, so as to prevent them from becoming too fond of each other. It is true she said so, but did she not say too that we must take the same care of both; for, after all, twins are not quite so strong as other children? I should rather have ours love each other too much, than sacrifice one to the other. And then, which should we put out to nurse? I confess that I should be quite as sorry to part with one as the other. I may say that I have loved all my children very much; but, somehow or other, these seem to me the dearest and prettiest that I have ever carried in my arms. I have a peculiar love for them that always makes me afraid of losing them. Please, husband, do not think of this nurse any more; we shall do everything else that Mother Sagette recommended. How can you expect children at the breast to love each other too much, when they can hardly tell their hands from their feet when they are weaned?"

"What you say is quite right," answered Father Barbeau, looking at his wife, who was still fresher and stronger than most women; "but suppose that, as the children grow bigger, your health begins to fail?"

"Do not worry," said Mother Barbeau; "I know I have as good an appetite as if I were fifteen; and besides, in case I feel worn out, I promise not to hide it from you, and there will always be time enough to send away one of these poor children."

Father Barbeau gave in, the more easily because he did not care about any useless expense. Mother Barbeau nursed her twins without complaint or injury to her health, and her constitution was so strong that two years after the twins were weaned she gave birth to a pretty little girl, whom they named Nanette, and whom she also nursed herself. But it was a little too much for her, and she would have found it hard to finish her task if her eldest daughter, who happened then to have her first child, had not relieved her from time to time by nursing her little sister.

Thus the whole family soon grew and flourished in the sun: the little uncles and the little aunts, with the little nephews and the little nieces, none of whom could be accused of being more noisy or more quiet than the rest.

CHAPTER II

THE twins grew apace, with no more ill health than other children; and their dispositions were so good and sweet that they seemed to suffer less in teething and growing than the rest of the little family.

They were blond, and remained blond all their lives. They were very good-looking, with their great blue eyes, their well-set shoulders, and their straight and firmly knit bodies. They were taller and stronger than boys of their age, and all the people of the country-side who passed through the town of Cosse stopped to look at them, wondering at their resemblance to each other; and everybody went off saying, "All the same, that is a pretty pair of boys."

It was for this reason that the twins early became accustomed to stares and questions, and they learned not to be shamefaced and foolish as they grew older. They were at their ease with everybody, and instead of hiding behind the bushes, as children do with us whenever they see a stranger, they confronted the first who came, although always very politely, and answered all questions without hanging their heads or waiting to be asked twice. At first sight, no one could tell the difference between them, but thought them as much alike as two peas. After a few minutes' observation, however, it became apparent that Landry was a hairbreadth taller and stronger, that his hair was a little thicker, his nose somewhat more decided, and his eye brighter. His forehead, too, was broader, and his manner more determined, and also a mark which his brother bore on his right cheek he had intensified on his left cheek. The people of the district, therefore, distinguished them easily; but even they needed a moment for recognition, and at twilight, or at a little distance, they were almost always deceived, especially as the voices of the twins were just alike, and because, as the boys knew that they might be taken for each other, they answered to each other's names without taking the trouble to correct the mistake. Occasionally Father Barbeau himself was confused. As

Mother Sagette had prophesied, their mother alone never mistook them, whether they were in the dark or at so great a distance that she could just see them coming or hear their voices.

In fact, one was as good as the other; and if Landry were a trifle more light-hearted and high-spirited than his elder brother, Sylvinet was so affectionate and so quick-witted that it was impossible not to like him as well as Landry. For three months the parents tried to prevent them from becoming too intimate. Three months in the country are considered a long time for anything to last in the face of discouragement. But precautions seemed to be of no use; and, moreover, the parish priest said that Mother Sagette was in her dotage, and that what God had put into the laws of nature could not be undone by man. Thus, little by little, every promise was forgotten. The first time the children left off their frocks to go to mass in trousers, they were dressed in the same cloth, because both suits were made from their mother's petticoat, and the cut was the same, for the village tailor knew no other.

When they grew older they were observed to like the same colors, and when their Aunt Rosette wished to make each of them a present of a cravat on New-Year's day, they both chose a cravat of the same lilac of the peddler who hawked his wares from door to door, on the back of his Norman horse. This aunt asked them if it were because they wanted always to be dressed alike. The twins did not look so far ahead; Sylvinet answered that the cravat was prettier in color and pattern than all those in the peddler's pack, and Landry immediately declared that all the other cravats were ugly.

"How do you like the color of my horse?" asked the peddler, smiling.

"I think it is hideous," cried Landry. "It looks just like an old magpie."

"As hideous as it can be," said Sylvinet. "It looks exactly like an ill-plucked magpie."

"You see," said the peddler to the aunt, with a shrewd look, "those children see things in the same light. If one takes yellow for red, the other will as quickly take red for yellow, and you must not thwart them, because they say that when people prevent twins from thinking themselves two prints from the same plate, they become idiots, and no longer know what they are talking about."

The peddler said this because his lilac cravats were badly dyed, and he wished to sell two at once.

All this continued as time went on, and the twins were dressed so much alike that they were still more often mistaken for each other; and either by childish mischief, or by the force of that law of nature which the priest thought it impossible to undo, when one had broken the toe of his sabot, the other soon made a hole in his own on the corresponding foot; when one tore his jacket or his cap, without a moment's delay the other imitated the tear so perfectly that one mishap seemed to have befallen both; and then our twins began to laugh and look slyly innocent when they were asked to explain what had happened.

For good or ill, their love for each other increased continually as they grew older, and as soon as they were able to think for themselves, they made up their minds that neither could enjoy himself with other children in the other's absence. Once, when their father tried to keep one of them all day with him while the other stayed with the mother, both were so sad, so pale, and so downhearted at their work, that they seemed ill. When they met in the evening, they went along the paths together, holding hands, and did not want to go into the house, so delighted were they to be together again, and because they were a little sulky with their parents for having pained them. This attempt was not repeated, for it must be admitted that father and mother, as well as uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters, loved the twins to the point of weakness. They were proud of them on account of the many compliments paid them, and because they could certainly not be called ugly or stupid or naughty. From time to time Father Barbeau worried a little over what this habit of being always together might result in when they should be men, and remembering the words of Mother Sagette, he tried to tease them so as to make them jealous of each other. For example, if they got into mischief, he pulled Sylvinet's ears, saying to Landry: "This time I forgive you, for you are generally the best behaved." But seeing that his brother escaped, Sylvinet was consoled for the tingling of his ears, and Landry cried as if it were he who had received the punishment. He tried also giving something which both wished for to one alone; but if it were anything good to eat, they divided it immediately, or if it were a plaything or a tool, they would use it together, or give it back and forth without distinction of ownership. If anybody complimented one on his conduct without seeming to do justice to the other, the latter was proud and happy to see his twin petted and encouraged, and began to flatter and caress him himself. In short, it was labor lost to try to separate them in mind or body; and as it is hard to vex the children we love, even for their good, things were soon allowed to go as it pleased Heaven; or else this slight teasing became a game which did not impose upon the children. They were very sly, and sometimes in order to be left alone they pretended to quarrel and fight; but it was only in fun, and while rolling about, they were careful not to do each other any harm. If some idle fellow were astonished to see them fighting, they would hide to laugh at him, and soon they could be heard humming and chattering like two blackbirds on a branch.

In spite of this great resemblance and this great affection, God, who has made no two things exactly alike in heaven or earth, decreed that they should have a very different fate; and so it was seen that they were two creatures separate in the mind of God and distinct in their own natures.

This was seen only when it came to the test, and this happened after they had made their first communion together. Father Barbeau's family was increasing, thanks to his two eldest daughters, who had given birth to many fine children. His eldest son, a fine handsome fellow, was in the army; his sons-in-law were good workmen, but labor was sometimes scarce. We have had in our country a series of bad years, resulting from severe storms as well as from business troubles, which emptied the pockets of the country people of more crowns than they brought back to them. So Father Barbeau was not rich enough to keep all his family at home, and he had to consider the question of putting his twins out to work. Father Caillaud, of the Priche, offered to let one drive his oxen, as he had a large farm to cultivate, and his boys were too old or too young for that kind of work. Mother Barbeau was much disturbed and grieved when her husband broached the subject to her. It was just as if she had never foreseen that such a misfortune could happen to her twins, and yet she had worried over the possibility of it ever since they were born; but, as she was very submissive to her husband, she had nothing to say, On his side, too, the father felt anxious, and arranged everything long beforehand. At first the twins cried, and spent three days walking together through the woods and meadows; never seen, except at meal-time. They would not say a word to their parents; and when asked if they had made up their minds to consent, they did not answer, but talked a great deal when they were alone together.

The first day they could do nothing but weep and walk arm in arm, as if afraid of being torn apart by force. Father Barbeau, however, would not have done this. He had a peasant's wisdom, which consists half of patience and half of confidence in what time can do. The next day, when the twins saw that their parents did not compel them, but left them to come to their senses, they were more afraid of their father's will than they would have been if he had threatened to punish them.

"We must submit to it," said Landry. "And we must decide which of us is to go; for they have left the choice to us, and Father Caillaud said that he could not take us both."

"What difference does it make to me whether I go or stay," said Sylvinet, "since we must be separated? Going elsewhere to live is nothing to me; if I were going with you, I should soon get used to doing without my home."

"That is easy enough to say," answered Landry, "and yet the one who stays at home will have more to comfort and less to vex him than the one who will never see his twin, or his father, or his mother, or his garden, or his cattle, or anything that used to give him pleasure."

Landry spoke firmly enough, but Sylvinet burst into tears again, for he had not so much resolution as his brother, and the idea of losing everything at once gave him so much pain that he could not stop crying.

Landry wept, too, but not so much, and not in the same way; for he was thinking of taking the greater evil for himself, and he wanted to see how much his brother could bear, so as to spare him the rest. He knew very well that Sylvinet was more afraid than he of going to a strange place, and of living in a family other than his own.

"See," said he to his brother, "if we can make up our minds to live apart, it is best for me to go away. You know that I am a little stronger than you, and when we are ill, as generally happens to us both at the same time, the fever takes a firmer hold on you than on me. They said that perhaps we shall die if we part. I do not think I shall die; but I cannot answer for you, and that is why I should like you to have our mother to cheer you and care for you. So, if they love one of us more than the other, which is not likely, I believe it is you whom they care for most, and I know that you are the most affectionate and clinging. Stay, then, and let me go. We shall not be far apart. Father Caillaud's land is next to ours, and we shall see each other every day. I like to work, and that will give me something to think of, and as I am a better runner than you, I can come more quickly to see you as soon as my day's work is over. As you will not have much to do, you can walk over to see me at work. I shall be much less anxious about you than if you were away and I at home. So I ask you to stay."

CHAPTER III

SYLVINET would not listen to this; although he had a more tender affection than Landry for his father, his mother, and his little sister Nanette, he shrank from leaving the burden to his dear twin.

When they had discussed the matter at length, they drew straws, and the lot fell on Landry. Sylvinet was not satisfied with the test, and wished to try heads or tails with a penny. Three times heads came up for him, and it was always Landry's lot to go.

"You see that it is the will of fate," said Landry, "and you know that fate must not be contradicted."

The third day, Sylvinet still cried, but Landry scarcely cried any more. The first idea of going away had pained him perhaps more than his brother, because he was more conscious of the demands made on his own courage, and because he could not forget the impossibility of resisting his parents; but by dint of thinking over his trouble, he mastered it sooner; and he had argued a great deal with himself, whereas Sylvinet's extreme distress robbed him of the courage necessary for the consideration of such a matter. Landry had decided to leave before Sylvinet had made up his mind to let him go.

Landry, too, had a little more self-esteem than his brother. They had been told so often that neither could be more than half a man if they did not accustom themselves to live apart, that Landry, who began to feel the pride of his fourteen years, wished to show that he was no longer a child. He had always been the first to persuade and influence his brother, from the first time they had looked for bird's-nests in the tree-tops to that very day. So this time, too, he succeeded in calming him, and that evening, when they went into the house, he told his father that his brother and he had agreed to do their duty, that they had drawn lots, and that it had fallen to him to drive the great oxen of the Priche.

Although they were now big and strong, Father Barbeau took his twins on his knee and spoke to them thus:

"My children, I know by your submission that you have reached the age of discretion, and I am well content. Remember that when children please their father and mother, they also please almighty God in heaven, and one day or other he will reward them for it. I do not wish to know which of you yielded first. But God knows, and will bless the one who proposed it as well as the other who consented."

Thereupon he took his twins to their mother to receive her praises; but Mother Barbeau found it so hard to keep back her tears that she could say nothing, and only kissed them.

Father Barbeau, who was no fool, knew very well which of the twins was the bolder, and which was the most attached to his home. He did not wish to let Sylvinet's ardor cool, for he saw that Landry had fully decided to go, and that nothing but his brother's grief could make him irresolute. So he woke up Landry before daylight, taking great care not to rouse Sylvinet, who slept by his side.

"Come, my boy," said he, in a low voice, "you must go to the Priche before your mother sees you; for you know how sad she is, and we must spare her a farewell. I am going to take you to your new master, and shall carry your bundle."

"Shall I not say good-by to my brother?" asked Landry. "He will be angry with me if I go without letting him know."

"If your brother wakes up and sees you going away, he will cry and wake your mother, and your mother will suffer still more on account of your sorrow. Come, Landry, you are a brave boy, and cannot wish to make your mother ill. Do your whole duty, my child; go without making the slightest noise. Not later than this evening, I shall bring you your brother, and, as to-morrow is Sunday, you shall come with the dawn to see your mother."

Landry obeyed bravely, and went out at the door of the house without looking behind. Mother Barbeau was not so sound asleep that she could not hear all that her husband said to Landry. The poor woman, feeling that her husband was right, did not stir, and merely pulled the curtain slightly aside to see Landry go out. Her heart was so full that she flung herself toward the foot of the bed to kiss him, but she stopped before the bed of the twins, where Sylvinet was still fast asleep. The poor boy had cried so much for three days and almost three nights that he was exhausted by fatigue, and was even a little feverish, for he tossed back and forth on his pillow, sighing deeply, and moaning in his sleep.

Then Mother Barbeau could not help thinking, as she looked at the twin that was left, that she would have suffered more in parting with him. It is true that he was the more sensitive of the two, either because his character was less strong, or because God has written in the law of nature that when two people are joined in love or friendship, one must always give his heart more perfectly than the other. Father Barbeau, who thought more of hard work and high spirit than he did of caresses and kind attentions, cared a little the most for Landry. But the mother cared a little the most for Sylvinet, who was the most attractive and winning.

Then she began to look at the poor boy, who was so pale and altered, and thought what a great pity it would be to put him out to service so young; that her Landry had more stuff in him to bear trouble, and that, besides, his love for his twin and his mother did not overpower him so far as to endanger his health.

"He is a child who has a great idea of his duty," thought she; "yet his heart must be a little hard, or he could never have gone off like that, without a murmur, without turning his head, and without shedding a single tear. He would not have had the strength to go two steps without falling on his knees to ask God for courage, and he would have come to my bedside, while I was pretending to sleep, even if it were only to look at me and kiss the edge of the curtain. My Landry is a real boy; he cares only for life and bustle, for work and variety. But this one has the heart of a girl; he is so gentle and sweet that I cannot help loving him as the apple of my eye."

Mother Barbeau thus reflected as she went back to her bed to lie awake, while Father Barbeau was taking Landry across the fields and meadows toward the Priche. When they passed the brow of a little hill, and could no longer see the farm-buildings of Cosse, Landry stopped and turned. His heart was too full for him to go a step farther, and he sat down among the ferns. His father pretended not to notice him, and walked straight on. After a moment, he called him gently, and said:

"See how light it is growing, Landry. We must make haste if we mean to reach the Priche before sunrise."

Landry got up, and, as he had sworn not to cry before his father, he held back the big round tears which came into his eyes. He made a motion as if he had dropped his knife, and he reached his destination without showing his grief, although it was serious enough.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Father Caillaud saw that the stronger and more industrious of the twins was given to him, he was delighted to receive him. He knew very well that the decision could not have been made without pain, and as he was a kind man, a good neighbor, and a great friend of Father Barbeau, he did his best to please and encourage the young boy. He ordered soup and wine to be given him, to raise his spirits; for it was plain to see that he was sorrowful. Then he led him off to yoke the oxen, and showed him how to do it. In fact, Landry was no novice at work of this kind; for his father had a fine pair of oxen, which he had often harnessed and driven very well. As soon as the child saw Father Caillaud's great oxen,—which were the best kept, the best fed, and of the strongest breed in the country,—his pride was gratified to have such fine cattle at the end of his goad. Then he was glad to show that he was neither awkward nor cowardly, and that he had nothing new to learn. Landry's father was not slow to enlarge on his son's worth, and when the time came to go to the fields, all Father Caillaud's children, boys and girls, big and little, came to kiss the twin, and the youngest girl knotted a branch of flowers to his hat with ribbons, because it was his first day of service and a kind of gala-day for the family that received him. Before leaving him, his father gave him some advice in the presence of his new master, and told him to please Father Caillaud in everything, and to care for the cattle as though they were his own. Landry promised to do his best, and went off to his plow.

He kept up a good face all day, worked well, and came back with a hearty appetite; for he had never toiled so hard before, and a little fatigue is a sovereign remedy for sorrow.

It was worse, however, with poor Sylvinet, in the Twinnery; for you must know that the house and property of Father Barbeau, situated in the township of Cosse, had been called by this name since the birth of the two children, and because soon after a servant of the house had given birth to twins, both girls, who did not live. Now, as peasants are great lovers of jests and nicknames, the house and land had acquired the name of the "Twinnery," and wherever Sylvinet and Landry went, the children would call out, "There go the twins of the Twinnery!"

On that day there was sadness at Father Barbeau's Twinnery. As soon as Sylvinet woke up and did not see his brother at his side, he guessed the truth; but he could not believe than Landry could go off like that without saying good-by, and he was angry in the midst of his grief.

"What have I done to him?" said he to his mother; "and how can I have offended him? I have always done as he thought best, and when he advised me not to cry before you, darling mother, I kept from crying, although my heart was bursting. He promised me not to go away without giving me some more words of encouragement, and without breakfasting with me at the end of the hemp-field, where we used to go to talk and play together. I wanted to do up his bundle for him and give him my knife, which is better than his. Then you did up his bundle last night without telling me anything about it, mother, and you knew that he wanted to go away without saying good-by to me?"

"I did as your father wished," answered Mother Barbeau.

And she said all she could think of to console him. He would listen to nothing; and it was only when he saw that she too was crying, that he began to kiss her, to ask her pardon for having added to her sorrow, and to promise her to stay with her to make amends. As soon as she had left him and had gone to attend to the poultry-yard and the washing, he ran off toward the Priche without a thought of where he was going, following his instinct as a pigeon follows his mate, taking no heed of his way. He would have gone all the distance to the Priche had he not met his father coming back, who said, as he took him by the hand to lead him home:

"We shall go this evening, but you must not interrupt your brother while he is at work, for that would not please his master; besides, your mother is in trouble at home, and I count upon you to cheer her."

CHAPTER V

SYLVINET came back to hang on his mother's petticoats like a little child, and did not leave her side all day long. He spoke constantly of Landry, and was unable to keep from thinking of him as he returned to the nooks and corners which they had frequented together. In the evening he went to the Priche with his father, who wished to go with him. Sylvinet was wild to embrace his brother, and he could not eat his supper because of his haste to set off. He expected Landry to run to meet him, and he kept thinking that he saw him approaching. But, much as Landry wanted to go, he did not stir. He dreaded the laughter of the young people of the Priche, who considered his love for his twin as a kind of disease, so that Sylvinet found him at table eating and drinking as if he had been with the Caillauds all his life. As soon as Landry saw Sylvinet come in, however, his heart jumped with joy, and if he had not restrained himself, he would have upset table and bench in his eagerness to greet his brother; but he did not dare to do so, for his master's family were looking at him curiously, amused to see in his love a novelty and a natural phenomenon, as the village schoolmaster used to say.

So, when Sylvinet sprang to him and cried as he kissed him, and hugged him as a bird in its nest presses close to its mate for warmth, Landry was vexed because of the others, though he could not help being pleased on his own account; he wished to appear more rational than his brother, and made him signs from time to time to be calm, to Sylvinet's astonishment and grief. While Father Barbeau was talking and drinking a glass or two with Father Caillaud, the twins went out together, as Landry wished to show his affection to his brother when no one was looking. The other boys, however, watched them from a distance, and even little Solange, Father Caillaud's youngest daughter, who was quite as mischievous and curious as a linnet, followed them with her little steps as far as the hazel copse. She laughed and looked abashed whenever they noticed her, because she kept expecting something extraordinary, though she hardly knew what there could be surprising in the love of two brothers.

Pained as Sylvinet was by the coolness of his brother's welcome, he did not think of reproaching him for it, so happy was he to be with him. The next day, Landry felt himself his own master, because Father Caillaud had excused him from all his duties, and he set off so early in the morning that he expected to find his brother in bed. Although Sylvinet was the greater sleeper of the two, he woke at the moment Landry was passing the orchard hedge, and ran out barefoot, as if conscious of his twin's approach. For Landry, it was a day of perfect happiness. He was delighted to see his family and home again, since he knew that he should not come back every day, and that he must look upon this pleasure as a kind of reward. Sylvinet forgot his troubles till the middle of the day. At breakfast, he knew that he should dine with his brother; but when dinner was over, he remembered that supper would be their last meal together, and he began to be disturbed and uneasy. He spoiled and petted his brother to his heart's content, giving him the best of his food, the crust of his bread, and the heart of his lettuce; and then he worried over Landry's clothes and his shoes, as if the boy had a long journey to go, and were much to be pitied, never guessing that he himself was the more unfortunate of the two, because he had the most to bear.

CHAPTER VI

THE week passed in this way: Sylvinet going to see Landry every day, and Landry stopping with him a minute or two whenever he came toward the Twinnery. Landry soon became used to his part, but it was different with Sylvinet, who counted the days and hours like a soul in torment. Nobody in the world but Landry could make his brother listen to reason, and even his mother turned to him to induce Sylvinet to be more reasonable; for the poor child's trouble increased from day to day. He did not care to play any longer, and only worked when he was bid; he still took his little sister out walking, but he scarcely spoke, and never thought of amusing her, and only watched to prevent her falling and hurting herself. The moment no one was looking, he went off all alone and hid where he could not be found. He scrambled into all the ditches, hedges, and gullies where he used to play and talk with Landry; he sat down on the roots where they had sat together, and put his feet in all the little brooks where they had waded about like a pair of ducks; he was happy whenever he found any twigs which Landry had whittled with his pruning-knife, or any pebbles which he had used as quoits or as bits of flint. He gathered them together and hid them in a hollow tree or under a brush-heap, so that he might take them out and look them over from time to time, as if they were things of value. He kept thinking and racking his brains for all the little memories of his past happiness. Such things would have meant nothing to another, but to him they were everything. He took no care for the future, for he could not bear to think of a series of days like those he was enduring. He thought only of the past, and pined away in a continual reverie.

Sometimes he fancied he saw and heard his twin, and then he talked to himself as though he were answering him. Or he went to sleep wherever he happened to be, and dreamt of him; and when he woke, he cried when he found himself alone, not sparing his tears nor trying to hold them back, for he hoped that fatigue would eventually lessen and put an end to his grief.

Once, when he had wandered through the meadows as far as the coppice, he found in the rivulet which issues from the wood after a heavy rain, but which was now almost dried up, one of those little mills our children make, and which are so neatly constructed that they turn in the current, and sometimes last a very long time, until other children break them or the floods carry them away. Sylvinet found this one whole and uninjured. It had been there more than two months, and as the place was unfrequented, nobody had seen or hurt it. Sylvinet recognized the mill as the work of his twin, and remembered that when he had made it, they had expected to come back to see it; but they had not thought of it again, and since then they had made many more mills in other places.

Sylvinet was delighted to find it again. He carried it a little lower down where the brook was still running, and as he watched it turn, he called to mind Landry's pleasure when he set it in motion for the first time. So he left it, hoping to come back the next Sunday with Landry to show him how well their mill had lasted because of its solid construction.

But he could not help coming back alone the very next morning, and then he found the borders of the brook disturbed and trodden down by a herd of oxen which had been put to pasture that morning in the grove, and which had come there to drink. He went forward a step or two, and found that the cattle had trampled on his mill, and had broken it up, so that there was but little of it to be found. Then his heart was heavy, and he imagined that some mischance must have befallen his twin on that same day, and ran as far as the Priche to make sure that there was nothing the matter. As Sylvinet had noticed that Landry did not like him to come in the daytime, lest his master should be provoked by his waste of time, he contented himself with merely watching his brother at work from a distance, and did not show himself. He would have been ashamed to confess why he had come, and he went home without saying a word, and without speaking of it to anybody until long afterward.

He became pale, slept ill, and ate hardly at all, and his mother became very anxious, and did not know how to cheer him. She tried to take him with her to market, or sent him with his father or his uncles to the cattle-fairs ; but nothing interested him or amused him, and Father Barbeau, without saying anything to the boy, tried to persuade Father Caillaud to take both twins into his service. Father Caillaud answered with a good sense that appealed to his friend:

"Suppose that I should take both for a time, it could not be for long, because where only one servant is needed, people like us do not want two. At the end of the year, in any case, you would be obliged to hire one out somewhere else. Do you not see, then, that if your Sylvinet were in a place where he should be forced to work, he would not brood so much, but would do like the other, who has borne his part so bravely ? Sooner or later you must come to that. Perhaps you will not be able to place him as you like, and if these children are destined to live still farther apart, and only to see each other once a week, or once a month, you had better begin now, to prevent their becoming inseparable. Be more prudent, my friend, and do not pay too much attention to the caprice of a child, who has been already too much petted and spoiled by your wife and your other children. The worst is over, and if you do not yield, you may be sure that he will come round."

Father Barbeau approved, and understood that the more Sylvinet saw of his twin, the more he would want to see him. He therefore decided to find a place for him by St. John's day, so that he should see Landry less and less, and learn in the end to love like other people, and not to allow himself to be carried away by an affection so extreme as to result in fever and weakness.

He could not speak of it yet to Mother Barbeau, for at the first word she shed floods of tears. She insisted that Sylvinet might die, and Father Barbeau was greatly perplexed. Landry, by the advice of his father, his master, and his mother, did not fail to use his influence with his poor twin; Sylvinet offered no resistance, promised all that was asked of him, and yet he could not control himself. There was something else in his trouble which he would not tell, because he could not bring himself to speak of it. A terrible jealousy on account of Landry had sprung up deep down in his heart. He was happy — happier than he had ever been — to see that everybody esteemed his brother, and that his new master treated him as affectionately as if he were a child of the house. Still, if in one way it delighted him, in another he was pained and troubled to see Landry respond too strongly, as he thought, to these new ties. It hurt his feelings when the slightest and gentlest word from Father Caillaud sent Landry running off against his will, leaving father, mother, and brother; more afraid of failing in duty than in friendship, and more prompt to obey than Sylvinet could ever have been when he might have stayed a few moments longer with a brother so much beloved.

Then the poor child was pained as he had never been pained before, for he thought that the love was all on his side, and that his affection was ill returned; that this state of things must have existed from the beginning, without his knowing it; or that for some time the love of his twin for him had cooled, because he had met elsewhere more congenial or more agreeable people.

CHAPTER VII

LANDRY never dreamed of his brother's jealousy, for it had never been in his character to be jealous himself. When Sylvinet came to see him at the Priche, Landry amused him by taking him to see the great oxen, the sleek cows, the well-ordered sheepfold, and the abundant crops of Father Caillaud's farm; for Landry felt the value of all these things, not because he was envious, but because he had a genuine taste for the cultivation of the earth, for the herding of cattle, and for the very best disposition of everything on the farm. He took pleasure in seeing that the colt he drove to pasture was fat, clean, and glossy, and he could not bear the least imperfection in his work, or that any of the good gifts of God, capable of living and increasing, should be forsaken, neglected, and almost despised. Sylvinet looked at all this with indifference, and was surprised that things for which he did not care were of so much interest to his brother. He took offense at everything, and said to Landry:

"You are very much in love with these great oxen, but you do not think any longer of our bullocks which are so full of spirit and yet so tame and gentle that they were more willing to be yoked by you than by our father. You have not even asked me for news of our cow that gives such good milk, and that looks at me so sadly, poor creature, when I feed her, just as if she understood how lonely I am, and as if she wished to ask me where my twin is."

"It is true that she is a good cow," said Landry; "but just look at these! When they are milked, you will say that you have never seen so much milk at once in your life."

"That may be," answered Sylvinet, "but I bet that the milk and cream they give are not so rich as Brunette's milk and cream, for the pasturage at the Twinnery is better than that over here."

"The deuce!" said Landry. "Do you not suppose that my father would be glad to exchange, if he could have Father Caillaud's great hay-fields instead of his rush-field by the water?"

"Nonsense!" answered Sylvinet, shrugging his shoulders; "there are trees in the rush-field finer than any you have, and as to the hay, though there is not much of it, it is very choice, and when they bring it home, it leaves a trail of perfume all along the way."

Thus they disputed over their little nothings, for Landry knew that nothing is better than what one actually possesses, and Sylvinet did not think of his own belongings more than those of other people when he underrated those of the Priche; but beneath all these light words, one of the children was happy to work and live, no matter where or how, and the other was not able to understand that his brother could have a moment's ease and comfort apart from him.

When Landry took him into his master's garden, and happened to stop talking in order to cut off a dead branch from a grafted tree, or to pull up a weed which interfered with the vegetables, it vexed Sylvinet to have him always intent on keeping order, instead of being on the watch like himself for the least breath or syllable from his brother. He let nothing of this appear, because he was ashamed that his feelings should be so easily hurt; but, as he was going away, he would often say:

"Well, you have had enough of me to-day, perhaps too much; it may be that you are bored by seeing me here."

Landry did not understand such speeches, but they pained him, and in his turn he reproached his brother, who neither could nor would explain himself.

If the poor child were jealous of the least thing which interested Landry, he was still more so of the people for whom Landry showed affection. He could not bear to have Landry friendly and good-natured with the other boys at the Priche, and when he saw him taking care of little Solange, petting or amusing her, he accused him of forgetting his little sister Nanette, who was to his thinking a hundred times more attractive and sweet-tempered than that horrid little girl.

No one is just when jealousy gnaws at his heart. When Landry came to the Twinnery, Sylvinet thought him too much engrossed by his little sister, and told him reproachfully that he paid attention only to her, and that toward him he showed but weariness and indifference.

Finally his affection became so exacting and his temper so melancholy, that little by little Landry began to suffer from it, and to take small pleasure in seeing him so often. He was annoyed by perpetual reproaches for having accepted his lot as he had done, and it was plain that Sylvinet would be less unhappy could he make his brother as unhappy as himself. Landry understood, and tried to make his brother understand, that love, by its very strength, can sometimes become an evil. Sylvinet would not hear of it, and even thought his brother very unkind for speaking so; and thus it happened that he sulked from time to time, and spent whole weeks away from the Priche, although he was dying to go there, keeping at home, and putting forth all his pride where it was most out of place.

It came to pass that by reason of disputes and quarrels, Sylvinet constantly misconstrued Landry's wisest and most sincere assurances, and so poor Sylvinet grew so pained that sometimes he thought he hated this brother whom he loved so tenderly. He even left the house one Sunday morning, to avoid spending the day with Landry, who had not once missed coming.

This childish humor grieved Landry very much. He loved pleasure and frolics, for he was growing stronger and more independent. He was first in every game, more agile in body and with a keener eye than his companions. It was really a sacrifice on his brother's behalf to leave the jolly boys of the Priche every Sunday and spend the day at the Twinnery with Sylvinet, who would not hear of playing in the public square or of going out anywhere to walk. Sylvinet, who had remained much more of a child in body and mind than his brother, and whose sole idea was to love him and to be loved by him in return, wished to take him alone to their haunts, as he called them: to the nooks and hiding-places where they used to play at games now no longer suited to their years; perhaps it was to make little wicker wheelbarrows, or mills, or snares to catch birds; or it might be houses of pebbles, or fields the size of a pocket-handkerchief, which children pretend to cultivate in various ways, making little imitations of everything they see done by the ploughmen, sowers, harrowers, weeders, and reapers, thus learning in an hour all the good the earth gives and receives in the course of the year.

Such amusements as these were no longer to Landry's taste, now that he practised these things, or helped to practise them, on a large scale, and preferred driving a large cart with six oxen to tying a little wagon made of branches to his dog's tail. He would rather have tried his skill at skittles with the big boys of the neighborhood, now that he had become expert in lifting the great ball and rolling it with perfect accuracy at thirty paces. When Sylvinet consented to go too, instead of playing, he would stay in a corner without saying a word, determined to be bored and tormented if Landry seemed to take too much pleasure and zest in the game.

In addition, Landry had learned to dance at the Priche; and although he had acquired this taste late, because Sylvinet had never had it, he already danced as well as those who take to it as soon as they can walk. People considered him a good dancer at the *bourrée;* and though as yet it gave him no particular pleasure to kiss the girls, as it is customary to do in every figure, still he was glad to kiss them, because it looked as if he were grown up, and he even wished them to make a little fuss about it, as they do with men. They did not, as yet, and the biggest even laughed and threw their arms round his neck, much to his annoyance.

Sylvinet had seen him dance once, and that had been the cause of one of his worst tantrums. He had felt so angry to see his brother kiss one of Father Caillaud's daughters, that he had cried with jealousy, and thought it quite indecent and outlandish.

Thus every time Landry sacrificed his pleasure to his brother's love for him, he did not pass a very amusing Sunday ; yet he had never failed to go, believing that Sylvinet would be grateful, and not grudging a tiresome day, if it were to please his brother.

When he found that his brother, who had sought a quarrel with him during the week, had gone away from home in order to avoid a reconciliation with him, he was grieved in his turn, and for the first time since he had left his family he shed big tears, and went off and hid; for he was ashamed of showing his sorrow to his parents, and afraid of increasing theirs.

If anybody had the right to be jealous, it was Landry far more than Sylvinet. Their mother loved Sylvinet the best, and Father Barbeau, too, although he secretly preferred Landry, showed more tenderness and consideration for Sylvinet. As the poor child was less strong and sensible, he was the more spoiled, and people were more careful not to hurt his feelings. His lot was the easier because he was with his family, and because his brother's sacrifice saved him from exile and sorrow.

For the first time our Landry argued in this way, and decided that his twin was entirely unjust toward him. Until now his warm heart had prevented him from blaming Sylvinet, and rather than find fault with him he had accused himself of superabundant health, of too much zeal at work and play, and of a want of the sweet words and delicate attentions his brother knew. This time, however, he could detect in himself no offense against their friendship; for that very day, in order to come home, he had given up a delightful expedition after crabs, which the boys of the Priche had been planning all the week, and which they had assured him he would enjoy very much if he would consent to go with them. Thus he had resisted a great temptation, and at his age that is a great deal. After he had cried a long time, he stopped to listen to somebody who was also crying at no great distance, and who was talking to herself as our peasant women do when they are in great distress. Landry knew immediately that it was his mother, and ran to her.

"O my God!" said she between her sobs. "Must I suffer so much for this child's sake? He will surely kill me."

"Is it I, mother, who make you suffer?" cried Landry, throwing his arms about her neck. "If it is I, punish me, but do not cry. I do not know how I can have grieved you, but I beg you to forgive me all the same."

Then his mother felt that Landry's heart was not so hard as she had often supposed. She pressed him closely to her, and without knowing exactly what she was saying, because of her trouble, she told him that it was Sylvinet, and not he, who grieved her; that although she had sometimes thought unjustly of him, she would now make amends for it; but that she feared Sylvinet was losing his mind, and that she was very anxious, as he had gone off before daylight without eating anything. The sun was going down, and he had not come home. He had been seen at noon near the river, and Mother Barbeau began to think that he had thrown himself in to end his life.

CHAPTER VIII

MOTHER BARBEAU'S idea that Sylvinet might have wished to die rushed into Landry's mind as a fly into a spider's web, and he dashed off to look for his brother. Fears crowded upon him as he ran, and he said to himself: "Perhaps my mother was right when she used to call me hard-hearted; but surely Sylvinet is so, too, now that he gives so much anxiety to our poor mother and to me."

He ran this way and that without finding him; he called without receiving an answer, and asked everybody for news, but in vain. At last he came to the rush-field, where he turned in, knowing that in that direction lay one of Sylvinet's favorite haunts. It was a large hollow which the river had worn away by tearing up two or three alder-trees, which still lay, root uppermost, across the stream. Father Barbeau had never cared to carry them off.

He had left them because, owing to the manner in which they had fallen, they still kept back the earth, which was held in place by the strong vines interlaced among the roots; and this was very fortunate, because every winter the water made havoc in his rush-field, and every year ate away a piece of his meadow.

Landry then approached the hollow, for so the brothers called that part of the rush-field. He did not take time to go as far as the corner, where there was a little stairway which they had once built of bits of turf supported by stones and large roots which protruded from the ground and struck out fresh shoots. He jumped down as far as he could in his haste to reach the bottom of the hollow, for the bushes and grass along the bank of the stream were so much taller than he, that even if his brother had been there he could not have seen him from above.

He reached the spot, full of emotion, remembering how his mother had told him that Sylvinet was in danger of putting an end to himself. He went to and fro among the bushes, beating the grass, calling to Sylvinet, and whistling to the dog, which had doubtless followed him, as all day no one at the house had seen any more of him than of his young master.

But call and shout as he would, Landry could find no one else in the hollow. As he was a boy accustomed to do everything thoroughly and to think of every expedient, he examined both banks to see whether he could not find a footprint or any worn spot in the earth which had not been there before. The search was anxious and troublesome as well, for Landry had not seen the place for about a month ; and although he knew it as he did his right hand, it was impossible that there should not be some little change.

The entire right bank was covered with turf, and, in like manner, at the bottom of the hollow, the rushes and the coarse grass had grown so thickly that there was no room to look for a footprint. After a long search Landry succeeded in finding in a remote corner the trail of the dog, and even one spot where the grass was trampled down, as if Finot or some other dog of the same size had curled himself up there.

This was a clew, and he examined the river's bank a second time. He thought he saw a fresh break, as if somebody had made it with his foot, by jumping or sliding; and, although he could not be sure, because it might just as well have been the work of the water-rats, which scratch, dig, and gnaw in such places, he was nevertheless so much troubled that his legs gave way under him, and he sank on his knees as if to pray.

He did not move for some time, not having the strength or courage to go and tell anybody the cause of his anguish, watching the river through his tears, as if he wished to call it to account for his brother's fate.

And all the while the river ran quietly on, rippling over the branches which overhung the banks and trailed in the water, pursuing its way through the fields like one who mocks and laughs in his sleeve.

Poor Landry allowed his forebodings to take possession of him so completely that he lost his head, and from a reality so slight that it might mean nothing, he created a misfortune which drove him to despair.

"This wicked river, which will not answer me," he thought, "and which would let me cry a year without giving me back my brother, is deepest in this very place; and since it overflowed the meadow, It is so full of rubbish that no one who falls in can ever get out again. O my God! can it be that my poor twin is there, underneath the water, lying scarcely two feet off where I could neither see nor find him, among the branches and reeds, even if I should jump in myself?"

Thereupon he began to weep for his brother, and to reproach him; for never in his life had he been so unhappy.

At last it occurred to him to consult a widow, by name Mother Fadet, who lived at the end of the rush-field, close by the path which goes down to the ford. This woman, although she had neither land nor goods, except her little house and garden, was never in want; for she had great knowledge concerning all the evils and sorrows of the world, and from every side people came to consult her. She made cures by a *hidden* art—that is to say, she healed wounds, bruises, and other injuries by means of her *secret*. She imposed a little upon others, for she would cure you of diseases which you had never had, such as the dislocation of the stomach or the rupture of the abdominal wall; and for my part, I have never quite believed in such accidents, any more than I can give entire credence to her reputed power of transferring the milk of a good cow into a bad one, however old and ill-fed.

But she had remedies that were really good against chills, and plasters excellent in case of cuts and burns, and sure potions to check fever; and certain it is that she earned her money deservedly, and that she cured a great many sick people whom the doctors would have killed had they been allowed to physic them. At least she said so herself, and those she had saved liked better to believe her than to venture a doubt on the subject.

Since, in the country, one cannot be thought wise without some reputation for sorcery, many people believed that Mother Fadet knew much more than she cared to confess, and they attributed to her the power of finding lost objects, and lost persons as well; in short, because she had much wit and wisdom to help people out of trouble in things which are possible, they inferred that she could not fail them in things which are impossible.

Children listen eagerly to all sorts of stories, and Landry had heard at the Priche, where everybody is notoriously more credulous and simple than at Cosse, that Mother Fadet could discover the body of a drowned person by means of a certain grain which she threw into the water with an incantation. The grain remained on the surface and floated along the water, and beneath the spot where it stopped the poor body was sure to be found. There are many who think that holy bread has the same virtue, and some of it is kept at every mill for that purpose. But Landry had none; Mother Fadet lived hard by the rush-field, and grief scarcely allows time for reflection.

So he set off running to Mother Fadet's dwelling, and began to tell her his trouble, imploring her to go with him as far as the hollow, and make use of her art to restore his brother, alive or dead.

Mother Fadet did not like to see her reputation in advance of her art, and, reluctant to give her advice for nothing, laughed at him and sent him away crossly enough; for she was angry that in former times Mother Sagette had been employed as nurse in her place when the children were born at the Twinnery.

Landry, who was a little proud by nature, at any other time would have been irritated, and would have answered angrily; but he was so overcome that he returned to the hollow without a word, determined to jump into the water, although he had not as yet learned to dive or swim. As he walked along, hanging his head and with his eyes fixed on the ground, he felt a light tap on his shoulder, and, turning round, he saw Mother Fadet's granddaughter, who was known in the country-side as little Fadette, quite as much because she was a little witch herself as because of her family name. Everybody knows that what we call the *fadet* or the *farfadet*, and what other people call the will-o'-the-wisp, is a very kindly sprite, though sometimes a little mischievous. The fairies, too, which no one believes in nowadays, in our part of the country are called *fades*. Whether they meant a little fairy or a girl-sprite, everybody who saw Fadette thought her the will-o'-the-wisp, so small was she, so thin, so dishevelled, and so bold. She was a very talkative and sarcastic child, lively as a butterfly, inquisitive as a robin-redbreast, and brown as a cricket.

When I compare little Fadette to a cricket, it is to let you know that she was not beautiful; for this poor little chirper of the fields is yet more ugly than its brother of the hearth. However, if you remember how you played with it as a child and made it chirrup angrily in your sabot, you must know that its little face is not without interest, and that it is more apt to amuse than to vex you; so the children of Cosse, who are no more stupid than other children, and who are quite as quick to notice resemblances and make comparisons, called little Fadette the "Cricket" when they wished to irritate her, and also as a term of endearment; for, although they feared her somewhat on account of her capacity for mischief, they did not dislike her, as she told them all kinds of stories, and constantly taught them new games that she had had the wit to invent.

Among all these names and nicknames, I have almost forgotten the one which she had received in baptism, and which perhaps later you may be desirous of knowing,—this was Françoise, and so her grandmother, who never liked to change names, called her Fanchon.

As there was a quarrel of long standing between the people of the Twinnery and Mother Fadet, the twins never talked much to little Fadette, and had even a kind of aversion to her, never liking to play with her or her little brother, whom they called the "Grasshopper." This child was still thinner and more mischievous than his sister, always at her side, storming when she ran off without waiting for him, throwing stones at her whenever she teased him, flying into greater passions than his size could warrant, and angering her in spite of herself; for she was of a happy disposition, and inclined to laugh at everything. There were such stories rife concerning Mother Fadet that some people, and especially those of Father Barbeau's household, thought the "Cricket" and the "Grasshopper" would bring them ill-luck if they came to know them. This did not prevent the two children from speaking to the Barbeau family; for they were not shy, and little Fadette never failed to greet the "twins of the Twinnery" with all sorts of fun and nonsense whenever she saw them coming in the distance.

CHAPTER IX

SO poor Landry, who was a little annoyed by the tap on his shoulder, turned round and saw little Fadette, and Jeanet the Grasshopper not far behind her, limping along; for he was ill-made and bow-legged from his birth.

At first Landry would pay no attention to her, but kept right on, for he was in no laughing humor; but Fadette said to him, tapping his other shoulder:

"Wolf, wolf! You naughty twin, only half a boy; you have lost your other half."

Thereupon Landry, who was no more in the mood to be insulted than to be teased, turned on little Fadette and struck out a blow with his fist, which would have hurt her severely had she not dodged it; for he was nearly fifteen, and no weakling, and she, though nearly fourteen, scarcely looked twelve, and was so slight and fragile that it seemed as if a touch must break her to pieces.

But she was too alert and too much on her guard to wait for his blows, and what she wanted in the strength of her hands she made up in agility and dexterity. She jumped aside just in time, so that he came near bruising his arm and head against a big tree which stood between them.

"You bad Cricket," said the poor boy in a rage, "I think you have no heart, if you want to vex anybody in as much trouble as I. You have been trying for a long time to make me angry by calling me half a boy. Now I should like to break you and your ugly little Grasshopper of a brother into four pieces, to see if both of you together would make the quarter of anything decent."

"Come, come, fine twin of the Twinnery, lord of the Rushery by the brook's boundary," answered little Fadette with a sneer, "you are very foolish to pick a quarrel with me, just when I was going to give you news of your twin, and tell you where to find him."

"That is quite a different thing," said Landry, calming down very quickly; "if you know, Fadette, tell me, and I shall be thankful."

"Fadette does not mean to tell you this time any more than the Cricket did," replied the little girl.

"You spoke rudely to me, and would have struck me, if you were not so awkward and clumsy. Go off and look for your mad brother by yourself, since you know so much about finding him."

"I am very foolish to listen to you, bad girl," said Landry, turning his back and beginning to walk off. "You don't know any better than I do where my brother is, and you are just as ignorant about it as your grandmother, who is an old liar and a good-for-nothing."

Fadette, holding by the hand little Grasshopper, who had succeeded in catching up with her and was clinging to her old and dusty petticoat, began to follow Landry, with sneering assurances that he could never find his twin without her aid. So Landry, who could not get rid of her, fancied that her grandmother or she herself, by some piece of sorcery or familiarity with the river-sprite, might prevent him from finding Sylvinet, and he decided to set off for home by the upper edge of the rush-field.

Little Fadette followed him as far as the stile of the meadow, and when he had crossed it, she perched herself on the top like a magpie and called out to him:

"Good-by, you pretty, heartless boy; you go off leaving your brother behind you. You may keep your supper waiting for him a long time, but you will not see him to-day or to-morrow; for he will not move from where he is any more than a lump of stone, and there is a storm coming up. There will be still more trees in the river to-night, and the river will carry Sylvinet away, so far, so very far, that you will never find him again."

These mischievous words, to which Landry listened almost against his will, made the cold sweat start from his body. He did not absolutely believe them, but still the Fadet family was so generally supposed to be in league with the devil that he could not be sure that what she said was quite false.

"Fanchon," said Landry, stopping, "tell me, yes or no, will you leave me alone or say whether you really know anything about my brother?"

"What will you give me if I find him for you before it begins to rain?" said Fadette, standing erect on the top of the stile and waving her arms as if she were about to fly.

Landry did not know what he had to give her, and he began to think that she was trying to get money out of him. But the whistling of the wind through the trees, and the distant crash of thunder, wrought him into an agony of terror. It is not that he was afraid of storms, but this storm had come up suddenly and in a way that seemed supernatural. Perhaps, in his anxiety, Landry had not seen it approaching from behind the trees which skirted the river, especially as he had been for two hours in the hollow beside the Val, and could not see the sky till he had climbed to the high ground. The truth was, he caught sight of the storm only at the moment when little Fadette announced it; and, as she spoke, the wind blew out her petticoat, her unkempt black locks straggled out from under the cap which she always wore untidily cocked over one ear, and bristled up like horsehair; a great gust of wind had just carried off the Grasshopper's cap, and it was only with great difficulty that Landry kept his from going too.

In the last few minutes the sky had grown very black, and Fadette, standing on the stile, looked twice her actual height; in short, we must confess that Landry was afraid.

"Fanchon," said he, "I will do as you wish if you will only give me back my brother. Perhaps you have seen him, and perhaps you know where he is. Be a good girl. I do not see what pleasure you can find in my anxiety. Show me that you can be kinder than your looks and words warrant."

"Why should I be kind to you," answered she, "when you treat me as if I were a bad girl, though I have never done you any harm? Why should I be good to twins who are as proud as two peacocks, and who have never shown me the slightest attention?"

"Come, Fadette," said Landry, "you want me to promise you something; tell me quickly what you want, and I will give it to you. Do you want my new knife?"

"Show it to me," cried Fadette, jumping down beside him like a frog.

When she saw the knife,—a good one that Landry's grandfather had bought for ten pennies at the last fair,—she was tempted for a moment; but soon she thought her price too low, and she demanded instead his little white hen, no bigger than a pigeon, and feathered to the tips of its claws.

"I cannot promise you my white hen, because it belongs to my mother," answered Landry; "but I promise to ask her to give it to you, and I am sure that she will not refuse, because she will be so glad to see Sylvinet again that she will think no reward too good for you."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed little Fadette; "and if I take a fancy to your black-nosed kid, will Mother Barbeau give that to me too?"

"Good heavens! how long it takes you to decide, Fanchon! You need say only one word; if my brother is in danger and you take me to him directly, I am very sure that there is not one of all our hens and chickens, goats and kids, at home, which my mother and father will not give you for thanks."

"Well, we shall see, Landry," said little Fadette, holding out her small thin hand for the boy to shake in token of their agreement; and he did so with some trembling, for at that moment her eyes glowed so like coals of fire that she looked like the hobgoblin in person. "I shall not tell you now what I want of you, and perhaps I do not know it yet myself; but remember what you have just promised; and if you fail, I shall let everybody know that there is no faith in your word. I say good-by to you now; and do not forget that I shall ask nothing of you until the day when I shall determine to go after you to demand something which shall be at my disposal, and which you must give without delay or regret."

"Good, Fadette, I promise; it is a bargain," said Landry, shaking her hand.

"Well," said she, with an air of pride and satisfaction; "go back to the river's bank, follow it along until you hear a bleating, and where you see a little black lamb, there you will see your brother. If everything does not happen as I tell you, I let you off your promise."

Thereupon the Cricket, taking the Grasshopper under her arm without paying any attention to his reluctance, though he wriggled like an eel, jumped off into the bushes; and Landry neither saw nor heard them any more than if he had been dreaming. He lost no time in wondering whether little Fadette had been making fun of him. He ran without taking breath to the end of the rush-field, and keeping beside it, he continued till he reached the hollow. There he was about to pass on without stopping, as he had already examined the spot, and was sure that Sylvinet was not there; but at that moment he heard the bleating of a lamb.

"O my God!" thought he, "that girl was right.

I hear the lamb; my brother is there, but I cannot tell whether he is alive or dead."

He jumped down into the hollow, and forced his way among the bushes. Sylvinet was not there; but on following the stream for ten paces, listening to the lamb's bleating, Landry saw his brother seated on the other bank of the river, holding in his blouse a little lamb, which was quite black—to tell the truth—from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail.

As Sylvinet was very much alive, and neither injured nor soiled in person or dress, Landry was so glad that he began to thank God in his heart, without a thought of asking pardon for resorting to the devil's art to attain this happiness. Just as he was about to call Sylvinet, who did not as yet see him, and apparently did not hear him, on account of the noise the water made by rushing rapidly over the pebbles in that spot, he stopped to look at him; for he was astonished to find him exactly as little Fadette had predicted,—as still as any stone, in the midst of the trees which the wind was blowing about furiously.

Everybody knows how dangerous it is to stay too close to the Val in a high wind. All the banks are undermined, and every heavy storm uproots some of the alders, which always have short roots, and may fall upon you without warning unless they are very big and old. But Sylvinet, though he was as wise as most people, did not appear to be aware of the danger. He thought of it no more than if he were under the shelter of a comfortable barn. Tired out by tramping all day and wandering aimlessly about, although by good luck he had not drowned himself in the river, it was easy to see that he was drowned in his sorrow and vexation so deep that he lay like a log, his eyes fixed on the stream, his face pale as a water-lily, his mouth half open like a little fish gaping at the sun, his hair tangled by the wind, and not even paying attention to the little lamb, which he had found straying through the meadows and had taken up in pity. He had indeed put it into his blouse to carry home, but on his way he had forgotten to ask to whom the lost lamb belonged. He kept it on his knees, and let it lie there, unconscious of its bleating, although the little creature cried despairingly, and looked about with its great bright eyes, astonished not to be heard by one of its kind. It could not see its meadow, nor its mother, nor its fold, in this shady, grassy place beside this great and terrifying rush of water.

CHAPTER X

IF Landry had not been separated from Sylvinet by the river, which is nowhere in its course more than four or five yards broad, but which in some places is as deep as it is wide, he would certainly have fallen on his brother's neck without a moment's hesitation. But as Sylvinet did not even see him, he had time to think how he should wake him from his reverie and persuade him to go home. Should poor Sylvinet be unwilling to consent to this, he might easily run away, while Landry could not follow him quickly enough for want of a ford or a foot-bridge.

After some reflection, Landry fell to considering how his father, a very shrewd and prudent man, would behave under similar circumstances; and, luckily, he came to the conclusion that Father Barbeau would set to work very quietly, as if nothing unusual had occurred, so that Sylvinet should not realize the anxiety he had caused, nor feel too great repentance, nor be disposed to try the same thing again the next time he should happen to be offended.

So he began to whistle as if to make blackbirds sing in answer, like the shepherds when they go through the bushes at nightfall. This made Sylvinet raise his head, and when he saw his brother he was ashamed, and rose quickly, thinking he had not been observed. Then for the first time Landry appeared to see him, and called to him without raising his voice very much, as in that spot the noise of the river was not loud enough to prevent conversation.

"O Sylvinet, are you there? I waited for you all this morning, and when I found that you had gone out for such a long time, I walked over in this direction while I was waiting for supper, thinking that I should find you at home then; but now that you are here, we will go back together. Let us follow the river, you on that bank, and I on this, until we meet at the ford of the Roulettes." That was the ford which was right opposite Mother Fadet's house.

"Let us go," said Sylvinet, picking up his lamb, which had not yet learned to know him, and was reluctant to follow; and they walked along the river without daring to look at each other, fearing to show how sorry they were for quarreling, and how glad they were to be together again. From time to time as they pursued their way, in order to appear unconscious of his brother's vexation, Landry addressed a few words to him. He asked him first where he had found the little black lamb, and Sylvinet would not tell him, because he did not care to acknowledge that he had been very far away, and that he did not even know the names of the places where he had wandered. Then Landry said, observing his embarrassment:

"You may tell me all about that later, for the wind is high, and it is not safe to stay under the trees along the river; but fortunately the rain is beginning to fall, and the wind will soon die away."

At the same time he said to himself, "It is really true that the Cricket was right when she told me that I should find him before the rain began. Surely that girl knows more than we do!"

He did not consider that he had wasted a full quarter of an hour in vainly entreating Mother

Fadet to listen to his prayers, and that little Fadette, of whom he had not caught sight till he left the house, might very well have seen Sylvinet during that conversation. At length the idea occurred to him; but how could she know so well the cause of his trouble when she greeted him, since she had not been present when he was talking with the old woman? This time he did not remember that coming from the rush-field he had asked news of his brother from several people, and that somebody might have spoken of it before little Fadette, or that possibly the little girl might have listened to the end of his conversation with her grandmother, hiding herself, as was her wont, in order to satisfy her curiosity.

On his side, poor Sylvinet was thinking how to explain his bad conduct toward his brother and his mother, for he had not expected such a ruse from Landry, and he did not know what story to tell, as he had never lied in his life, and had never kept anything from his twin.

He was ill at ease when he crossed the ford, not having been able to think of an excuse.

No sooner had his brother reached the other bank than Landry flung his arms about him with more tenderness than he cared to display, or than was usual with him; but he refrained from questioning him, for he saw that Sylvinet had nothing to say; and he brought him home, talking of all manner of things other than what they had most at heart. As they passed in front of Mother Fadet's house, he looked carefully about for little Fadette; for he wished to thank her. But the door was shut, and there was no sound to be heard except the cries of the Grasshopper, who was bawling because his grandmother had whipped him — as she did every day, whether he deserved it or not.

Sylvinet was sorry to hear the young scapegrace cry, and said to his brother:

"There are always screams or blows to be heard in that odious house. I know the Grasshopper is as horrid and fractious as he can be; and I would not give two pennies for the Cricket. Those poor children have neither father nor mother, and have to depend on an old witch who is always in some mischief or other, and who does not give them anything."

"That is not the way we were brought up," answered Landry. "We never had any beatings from our father or mother, and even when they scolded us for our childish mischief, they did it so gently and quietly that the neighbors could not hear it. There are some people, like us, who are very happy and do not know it; and yet little Fadette, who is the most unlucky and the most ill-treated child in the world, is always laughing, and never complains."

Sylvinet understood the reproach, and was sorry for what he had done. He had repented often that day, and twenty times he had been on the point of going home; but shame had held him back. Now his breast heaved, and he wept silently; but his brother took his hand, and said:

"It is going to pour, Sylvinet; let us race home."

So they began to run, and Landry tried to amuse Sylvinet, who forced a smile to please him.

Just as they were going into the house, Sylvinet wanted to hide in the barn in order to escape a scolding from his father. But Father Barbeau did not take life as seriously as his wife, and contented himself with laughing at him; and Mother Barbeau, who had learned a wise lesson from her husband, tried to hide the anxiety she had felt. It was only while she was making up a good fire to dry the twins, and was giving them their supper, that Sylvinet saw she had been crying, and from time to time looked at him sadly and uneasily. If he had been alone with her, he would have asked her pardon, and would have kissed away her grief; but his father was not fond of such cajoleries, and Sylvinet, overcome by fatigue, was forced to go to bed immediately after supper, without a word of explanation. He had eaten nothing all day, and as soon as he had swallowed his supper—of which he was greatly in need—he felt as if drunk, and was obliged to allow himself to be undressed and put to bed by his brother, who stayed with him, sitting on the side of his bed holding his hand in his.

When Sylvinet was sound asleep, Landry said good-night to his parents, without noticing that his mother kissed him more tenderly than ever before. He always knew that she could not love him as she did his brother; but he was not jealous, as he was persuaded that he was less amiable, and that he received his due portion. He submitted to this, as much out of consideration for his mother as out of love for his brother, who needed petting and consolation more than he.

Next morning Sylvinet ran to his mother's bedside before she was up, and opening his heart to her, confessed his sorrow and his shame. He told her how, for some time, he had been most unhappy, not so much on account of his separation from Landry, as because he fancied that Landry had ceased to care for him. When his mother asked him why he did his brother such injustice, he could not explain; for it was like a disease which he could not escape. His mother understood him better than she was willing to acknowledge, because a woman's heart is an easy prey to such torments, and she herself had often suffered when she saw how calm Landry was in his resolution and courage.

This time she recognized that jealousy is wrong, even in those affections which God most commends, and she was very careful not to encourage it in Sylvinet. She called his attention especially to the pain he had caused his brother, and to that brother's great forbearance in not complaining or showing offense. Sylvinet acknowledged it, too, and agreed that his brother was better than he. He made a promise and formed a resolution to cure himself, and he was sincere in his desire.

Despite himself—though he did his best to look happy and contented, though his mother dried his tears and found soothing answers to all his complaints, and though he did his best to behave naturally and fairly toward his brother — there still remained a leaven of bitterness in his heart. He could not help saying to himself: "My brother is more Christian and right-minded than I; my dear mother says so, and it is the truth; but if he loved me as much as I love him, he never could have done as he has."

And it came into his mind how quiet and almost indifferent Landry appeared when he found him on the river's bank. He remembered how he had heard him whistling for blackbirds in his search, at the very moment when he himself was contemplating a death in the river. If he had not left home with this idea, before evening came he had thought of it more than once, because he believed that his brother would never forgive him for sulking and running away from home the first time in his life.

"Had he offended me in this way," thought he, "I should never forget it. I am very glad that he has forgiven me, but still I could not help thinking that it would be impossible for him to forgive me so easily."

Then the poor child sighed as he struggled with himself, and struggled in spite of his sighs.

However, as God always rewards and helps us according as we try to please him, Sylvinet became more reasonable; for the rest of the year he neither sulked nor quarreled with his brother—in short, he loved him more calmly; and he grew strong, and recovered his health, which had suffered through his distress of mind. His father gave him much to do, as he observed that the less time he had for meditation, the happier he was. Still, work at home is never so hard as work for hire, and Landry, who never spared himself, gained more that year in strength and stature than his twin. The small differences between them, which had always been apparent, became intensified, and passed from their souls into their faces. When they had completed their fifteenth year, Landry grew into a fine-looking fellow, while Sylvinet was still a pretty lad, more slender and less manly than his brother. They were no longer mistaken for each other, and though they always looked like brothers, no one at first sight thought them twins. Landry, who was called the younger, as he was born an hour after Sylvinet, seemed to strangers the elder by a year or more. This increased the love of Father Barbeau, who, like the true peasant he was, esteemed muscle and stature before everything.

CHAPTER XI

FOR some time after Landry's adventure with little Fadette, the boy felt worried about the promise he had made. At the moment when she had released him from his anxiety, he was willing to pledge all the best his father and mother owned at the Twinnery; but when he saw that Father Barbeau had not taken Sylvinet's pettishness seriously, and that he had shown no uneasiness, he feared lest his father should shut the door in little Fadette's face when she should come to demand her reward, sneering at her boasted art, and at the magnificent promises which Landry had made.

This fear made Landry thoroughly ashamed, and now that his trouble was past, he thought he had been very foolish to see any witchcraft in what had happened. He was not sure that little Fadette had made fun of him, but he felt there might be a doubt on the subject, and he could find no good reasons to satisfy his father that he had acted wisely in entering upon an engagement which involved such heavy consequences; on the other hand, he felt it impossible to break such an engagement, for he had pledged his faith, and he had done it in honor and conscience.

To his great astonishment, neither the next day after the adventure, nor that month, nor that season, did he hear anything of little Fadette at the Twinnery or at the Priche. She neither came to Father Caillaud's farm to ask to speak to Landry, nor to Father Barbeau's to claim anything, and when Landry caught sight of her far off across the fields, she never approached him, and paid no attention to him. This was unusual, for she was in the habit of running after everybody to stare at them out of curiosity, to laugh, joke, and banter with those who were in good humor, or to rail and scoff at those who were not.

As Mother Fadet's house is midway between the Priche and the Cosse, it was impossible that one day or other Landry should not find himself in the path face to face with little Fadette; and since the path is narrow, Landry could not well avoid giving her a word of greeting in passing.

One evening, as little Fadette was bringing home her geese, the Grasshopper as usual at her heels, and Landry, who had been to the meadow after the mares, was driving them quietly home to the Priche, the two met in the little path which leads down from the Cross of the Bossons to the ford of the Roulettes, and which is sunk so deep between two embankments that there were no means of escape. Landry blushed, afraid of being called upon to fulfil his word; and not wishing to encourage little Fadette, the moment he saw her he jumped upon one of the mares, and kicked her with his sabots to make her trot; but as all the mares had hobbles on their feet, the mare which he bestrode could go no faster. When Landry saw little Fadette near at hand, he dared not look at her, and turned, pretending to see whether his fillies were following. When he looked ahead again, he found that Fadette had already passed him without a word; he did not even know whether she had glanced at him, or had tried to bid him good-evening with a look or smile. He saw only Jeanet the Grasshopper, who, following his malicious and disagreeable disposition, had picked up a stone to throw at the mare's legs. Landry felt a desire to give him a cut with the whip, but he dreaded lest he should have to stop for an explanation with the sister. So he pretended not to notice him, and went on without looking behind him.

It was always about the same when Landry met little Fadette. Little by little he took courage to look her in the face; for as he grew older and wiser he did not think so much of such a slight matter. When he grew bold enough to watch her calmly, ready to hear anything she might have to say, he was surprised to see that the girl purposely turned her head away, as though she were as much afraid of him as he of her. This emboldened him, and as he was of a just disposition, he asked himself if he had not done amiss in never thanking her for the comfort she had given him, whether she had succeeded by art or by chance. He resolved to speak to her the next time he saw her, and when that moment came he advanced at least ten steps toward her to say "How do you do?" and to begin a conversation with her.

As he approached, however, little Fadette looked very proud and almost angry; and when she finally decided to meet his gaze, she did it so disdainfully that he lost countenance and dared not address her.

It was the last time that year that Landry saw her near at hand, for, from that day on, little Fadette, led by some whim or other, avoided him successfully, and whenever she saw him in the distance, she would turn aside into some field, so as not to meet him. Landry thought her angry on account of his ingratitude; but his reluctance was so great that he took no step toward a reconciliation. Fadette was not like other children. She was naturally too little prone to take offense, and her sharp tongue was so ready with the last sarcastic word that she liked to provoke jeers and derision. No one had ever seen her sulky, and people even reproached her with a want of that pride which every girl should have when she is fifteen years old and begins to feel her own importance. She was a little tomboy, and often tried to tease and torment Sylvinet till his patience was exhausted, when she caught him unawares dreaming, as was still his wont. When she met him she always followed him for a part of the way, laughing at him for being a twin, and torturing his feelings by saying that Landry did not care for him, and only made light of his misery. So poor Sylvinet, who believed more firmly than Landry in her witchcraft, was astonished that she should guess his thoughts, and detested her heartily. He despised both her and her family, and as she avoided Landry, so he avoided the hateful Cricket; for he thought that sooner or later she must follow the example of her mother, who had led a bad life, and in the end had left her husband to follow the camp. Shortly after the birth of her little boy, she had gone off as a *vivandière,* and had never been heard of since. The husband had died of mortification, and so old Mother Fadet was obliged to assume the charge of the two children, of whom she took little care; for she was so aged and niggardly that she was quite unfit to look after them and bring them up properly.

For all these reasons, though Landry was not so proud as Sylvinet, he felt disgust for little Fadette, and sorry that he had ever had anything to do with her, and took great care not to let anybody know of it. He even kept it from his twin, as he was not willing to acknowledge to him how much uneasiness he had suffered on his account. Sylvinet, on his side, was silent in regard to little Fadette's malice toward him, ashamed to confess that she had divined his jealousy.

But time went on. At the age of our twins weeks are like months, and months like years, in the changes they bring to body and mind. Landry soon forgot his adventure, and after a little anxiety over the recollection of Fadette, he thought no more of it than if it had been a dream.

Landry had been about ten months at the Priche, and St. John's day, the anniversary of his engagement with Father Caillaud, was near. That good man was so much pleased with him that he had decided to increase his wages rather than let him go; and Landry asked for nothing better than to remain in the neighborhood of his family, and to renew his term at the Priche, where he found the people very congenial. Besides, he felt that he was becoming attached to a niece of Father Caillaud's, Madelon by name, a fine specimen of a girl. She was a year older than he, and still treated him a little like a child; though less and less as the days went on. At the beginning of the year she had made fun of his embarrassment when he kissed her in games or dances, but at the end she blushed instead of teasing him, and would no longer stay alone with him in the barn or in the hay-loft. Madelon was not poor, and a marriage might very well in time have been arranged between them.

Both families were very respectable and esteemed throughout the country-side. After some time, Father Caillaud, who observed that these two children desired and yet dreaded each other's companionship, said to Father Barbeau that they would make a fine couple, and that he saw no harm in letting their friendship grow as time went on.

So, a week before St. John's day, it was settled that Landry should remain at the Priche, and that Sylvinet, who had come to his senses, should stay at home; for Father Barbeau had fallen ill with a fever, and found the boy very useful in working the farm. Sylvinet had been much in dread of being sent away to a distance, and this fear had turned to good account, for he tried more and more to overcome his excessive fondness for Landry, or at least to make it less apparent. Peace and contentment returned to the Twinnery, although the twins saw each other only once or twice a week. The feast of St. John was a happy day for them; they went to town together to see the crowd of servants waiting to be hired out for service in town or country, and the festival which followed in the great square. Landry danced more than once with the pretty Madelon, and Sylvinet tried to please him by dancing too. He did not acquit himself very well; but Madelon was particularly kind to him, and when opposite to him she took him by the hand to teach him the step. Sylvinet, happy to be in his brother's company, made up his mind to learn to dance well, so that he could share a pleasure which up to that time he had grudged Landry.

He was not very jealous of Madelon, because Landry was still reserved in her presence. Besides, Madelon petted and made much of Sylvinet. She was unembarrassed with him, and a careless observer would have thought him her favorite. Landry might have been jealous, had it not been foreign to his nature; and perhaps, in spite of his great simplicity, something told him that Madelon only behaved thus to please him, and to find more frequent opportunities of being in his company.

Everything went well for about three months, until the feast of St. Andoche, the patron saint of the town of Cosse, whose day comes toward the last of September.

That day was always a glorious holiday for the twins, because it was celebrated with dances and games of all kinds under the great walnut-trees of the village; but this year it brought them new and unlooked-for troubles.

As Father Caillaud had given permission to Landry to spend the night before the feast at the Twinnery, so that he might take part in the early festivities next day, Landry started before supper, rejoicing in the prospect of surprising his brother, who did not expect him before morning. It was the season when the days begin to shorten and the nights come on quickly. Landry was never afraid of anything in full daylight; but it would not have been natural if at his age and in his part of the country he had liked to be alone on the roads after dark — above all, in autumn, which is the season when witches and sprites love to carouse, because of the fogs, which help to hide their pranks and mischief. Landry, who was accustomed to go alone at all hours to drive his oxen out or back, was not particularly anxious that evening; but he walked quickly and sang aloud, as peasants do when the nights are dark; for it is known that a man's song startles and scares away evil beasts and evil beings.

When he reached the ford of the Roulettes (so called because of the quantity of round pebbles at its bottom), he turned up the legs of his trousers, for he knew that the water might come above his ankles, and he was very careful not to walk straight before him, because the ford crosses the river obliquely, and there might be bad holes to right or left. Landry knew the ford so well that he could not make a mistake. Besides, he could see from where he was through the trees, which were more than half stripped of their leaves, the little light which came from Mother Fadet's house, and by looking at this light and directing his steps toward it, he was sure there was no chance of making a misstep.

It was so dark under the trees, however, that Landry sounded the ford with his stick before stepping in. He was surprised to find the water deeper than usual, especially as he heard the noise of the sluices, which had been open for a full hour. However, since he could see distinctly the light from Fadette's window, he risked it; but after two or three steps he found that the water came up above his knees, and he drew back, thinking that he had made a mistake. He tried the stream above and below, but in both places the water was still deeper. No rain had fallen, and there was a continual roar from the sluices. It was very surprising

CHAPTER XII

"I MUST have tried the ford in the wrong place," thought Landry; "for now I see Fadette's candle on my right, and certainly it should be on my left."

He retraced his steps as far as the Cross of the *Lièvre*, and walked all round it, keeping his eyes closed in order to forget his previous impressions; and after he had examined the neighbouring trees and bushes carefully, he struck into the beaten path and returned to the river-bank. Although the ford looked shallow, he dared not advance more than a step or two; for all of a sudden he perceived, almost directly behind him, the light from Mother Fadet's house, and he knew it should be full in front. He returned to the bank, and now the light seemed to be in its proper place. He tried the ford once more, crossing obliquely in another direction, and this time the water almost reached his waist. Nevertheless, he kept straight on, thinking that although he had got into a hole, he would get out again by keeping straight on toward the light.

He was forced to stop, for the hole grew deeper at every step, and he was wet up to the shoulders. The water was very cold, and he halted a moment in doubt whether it were not best to return; for the light appeared to have changed its position, and he could even see it move, glide, leap, and bound from one bank to the other, and finally it seemed to be double as it reflected itself in the water and rested like a bird poised on its wings, with a little sputtering sound like that made by a resinous torch.

This time Landry was afraid, and almost lost his head; for he had heard it said that there was nothing more deceptive and dangerous than this very fire, which made sport of all who looked at it, and delighted to lead them into the deepest water, laughing after its own fashion, and mocking the agony of its victims.

Landry shut his eyes to avoid seeing it, and turning quickly, he scrambled out of the hole at all risks and stood once more on the bank, and watched the will-o'-the-wisp, which kept on dancing and laughing. It was, indeed, uncanny to see it dart about like a kingfisher, and again disappear altogether. Sometimes it grew as large as the head of a bull, and then it shrank in a twinkling to the size of a cat's-eye. It came close to Landry, and circled round him so quickly that he felt dazed; and finally seeing that he would not follow, it turned away to flutter about among the reeds, where it seemed to sulk and meditate some further impertinence.

Landry dared not stir, for to retrace his steps was not the way to get rid of the will-o'-the-wisp. Everybody knows how it persists in chasing people who run away, and how it keeps crossing their path until it robs them of their senses and makes them tumble into a pitfall. He was shivering with fear and cold, when he heard behind him a very sweet little voice singing:

Sprite, sprite, little sprite,
Take thy trumpet and thy light;
I have my cloak, for it grows late,
And every fairy has her mate;

and the next instant, little Fadette, who was gaily making ready to cross the stream, without a sign of fear or astonishment in the presence of the fairy flame, stumbled against Landry, who was sitting on the ground in the darkness, and then started back swearing, just as if she were a boy not unlearned in oaths.

"It is I, Fanchon," said Landry, getting up; "do not be afraid. I am no enemy of yours."

He spoke thus because he was almost as much afraid of her as of the sprite. He had heard her song, and understood very well that she was making an incantation to the will-o'-the-wisp, which danced and twirled madly before her, as if it were glad to see her.

Then little Fadette spoke, after a moment's thought:

"I know very well, my pretty twin, that you only flatter me because you are frightened half to death, and your voice shakes in your throat just as my grandmother's does. Come, faint-heart, nobody is as bold in the dark as in the daylight, and I wager that you have not the courage to cross the stream without me."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Landry. "I have just come out of it, and was almost drowned. Are you going to risk it, Fadette? Are you not afraid of missing the ford?"

"And why should I miss it? But I see what it is that is worrying you," answered little Fadette, with a laugh. "Come along, coward; give me your hand. The sprite is not so bad as you think, and it only harms people that are afraid of it. I often see it myself, and we know each other."

Then, with more strength than Landry supposed she possessed, she pulled him by the arm and led him into the ford, running and singing:

> I have my cloak, for it grows late,
> And every fairy has her mate.

Landry felt hardly more at his ease in the society of this little witch than in that of the will-o'-the-wisp. However, since he liked better to see the devil in the guise of a being of his own kind than in the form of such a sly and fleeting fire, he made no resistance, and was soon reassured by finding that Fadette had guided him so well that he was walking again on the dry pebbles. As they walked quickly along together, they created a draught which attracted the will-o'-the-wisp, and so they were continually followed by this meteor, as our schoolmaster calls it,—and he knows a great deal about it, and assures us that we have nothing to fear from it.

CHAPTER XIII

POSSIBLY Mother Fadet, too, had some knowledge on the subject, and had warned her granddaughter not to fear these nocturnal fires; or perhaps it was by dint of seeing them — for they were often in the neighborhood of the ford of the Roulettes, and it was only by an odd chance that Landry had never beheld one near at hand — that the little girl had come to the conclusion that the sprite from which they emanated was not evil, and would do no harm. She felt Landry tremble from head to foot as the will-o'-the-wisp approached them.

"Idiot," she said to him; "that fire does not burn, and if you were clever enough to touch it, you would see that it does not even leave a mark."

"That is all the worse," thought Landry. "If fire does not burn, you cannot tell what it is. It cannot come from God, for the fire that God gives is made to heat and burn."

But he did not betray his thought to little Fadette, and when he reached the bank safe and sound, he felt a strong desire to leave her there and to make his escape to the Twinnery. His heart was not ungrateful, however, and he would not leave Fadette without a word of thanks.

"This is the second time you have done me a favor, Fanchon Fadet," he said to her, "and I should be worthless did I not tell you that I shall remember it all my life. I was sitting there like a fool when you found me. The sprite had bewitched and overpowered me, and I should never have crossed the river; or, indeed, I should never have got out of it."

"Perhaps you might have crossed without trouble or danger if you were not such a fool," answered little Fadette. "I should never have believed that a big boy like you, who is nearly seventeen, and will soon have a beard on his chin, could be so easily frightened, and I am glad to see you like this."

"And why are you glad, Fanchon Fadet?"

"Because I have no liking for you," said she, contemptuously.

"And why is it that you have no liking for me?"

"Because I have no good opinion of you, of you nor your twin, nor your father, nor your mother, who are proud because they are rich, and who think that people only do their duty when they do them a kindness. They have taught you to be ungrateful, Landry; and that is the worst fault a man can have except cowardice."

Landry was much humiliated by the reproaches of the little girl, for he felt that they were not entirely undeserved, and he answered her:

"If I am to blame, Fadette, blame only me. Nobody at home, neither my brother, nor my father and mother, know anything about the help that you once before gave me. But this time they shall know it, and you shall have what reward you want."

"Ah! here you are high and mighty, indeed," replied little Fadette; "because you think that with your presents you can square accounts with me. You think that I am like my grandmother, who puts up with all the rudeness and insolence in the world, so long as somebody will give her a little money. But as for me, I do not want your gifts, and I despise all you may give me; for you have not had the heart to find a kind or friendly word to say to me since nearly a year ago, when I cured you of a great sorrow."

"I am to blame, I confess, Fadette," said Landry, who could not help feeling astonished at the way in which he now heard her talk for the first time; "but it is also a little your own fault. There was not much magic about making me find my brother, since no doubt you had just been watching him while I was telling my story to your grandmother; and if you really had a kind heart, you, who reproach me with not having any, instead of allowing me to wait so anxiously, and instead of giving me directions which might have led me off the track, would have said at once: 'Walk through the meadow, and you will see him on the river-bank!' That would not have cost you much trouble; but, instead of this, you made a mean joke of my distress, and it is this that has cheapened the price of the service you have done me."

Little Fadette had an answer ready, but she was silent for a moment, and then she said:

"I understand very well that you have done your best to shut out all gratitude from your heart, and to persuade yourself that you owe me nothing because of the reward that I insisted upon your promising me. But once again your heart is hard and bad, for you have never noticed that I have not demanded anything of you, and that I have never even reproached you for your ingratitude."

"That is true, Fanchon," said Landry, who was honesty itself. "I am in the wrong. I have felt it, and have been ashamed. I ought to have spoken to you. I intended to do so, but you always looked at me so angrily that I did not know how to go about it."

"And if you had come the day after our conversation to say a friendly word, you would not have found me at all angry; you would have discovered at once that I did not wish any payment, and we should have been friends; but, instead of this, I have now a very bad opinion of you, and I ought to have left you to get away from the sprite as best you could. Good-night, Landry of the Twinnery; go, dry your clothes, and tell your parents: 'If it had not been for that little ragged Cricket, upon my word, I should have drunk my fill of the river to-night.'"

As she spoke thus, little Fadette turned her back on him, and marched off toward her house, singing:

Take your lesson and your pack,
Landry Barbeau, and then go back.

This time Landry felt a great repentance in his soul,— not that he was disposed to any sort of friendship with a girl who was more clever than kind, and whose manners were displeasing even to those whom they amused; but his heart was upright, and he wished to keep a clear conscience. He ran after her, and caught her by her cloak. “Come, Fanchon Fadet, he said to her, “we must settle this matter between us and be done with it. You are dissatisfied with me, and I am not too well satisfied with myself. You must tell me what you wish, and not later than to-morrow I will bring it to you.”

“I wish never to see you again,” answered Fadette, harshly; “and no matter what you bring me, you may be sure I shall throw it in your face.”

“You are too rude to me, now that I am trying to make you amends. If you do not want a present, perhaps there is some way of doing you a service and showing you that I wish you no harm. Come, tell me what I can do to satisfy you.”

“Then you are not going to ask my pardon and try to make friends with me?” demanded little Fadette, stopping.

“It would be very hard to ask your pardon,” answered Landry, unable to conquer his pride toward a girl who did not receive any of the consideration due to the age she had just reached, since her behavior was too often wanting in propriety. "As for your friendship, Fadette, your mind is so oddly constructed that I could have no great confidence in you. So, ask for something that I can give you right away, and that I shall not have to take back again."

"Very well, then," said Fadette, in a clear, dry voice; "it shall be as you wish, Landry the twin. I have offered you your pardon, and you despise it. Now I demand the promise you have made me, which is to obey my command the day I shall require it of you. That day shall not be later than to-morrow, the feast of St. Andoche; and this is what I wish: you must dance three times with me after mass, twice again after vespers, and still twice again after the angelus. That will make seven times. And all day long, from the moment you get up till you go to bed, you must not dance with anybody else, whether she be girl or married woman. If you fail in this, I shall know that you have three very ugly qualities: ingratitude, cowardice, and want of faith. Good-night. To-morrow

I shall wait for you at the door of the church to open the dance."

And little Fadette, whom Landry had followed to her house, drew the latch and entered so quickly that the door was shut and latched before the twin could answer a word.

CHAPTER XIV

LANDRY thought Fadette's idea so odd that he felt more inclined to laugh than to be annoyed at it.

"This girl," said he to himself, "is more foolish than bad, and more disinterested than one would think; for it will not ruin my family to pay her."

Still, as he thought it over, the acquittal of his debt seemed harder than he had supposed. Little Fadette danced very well; he had seen her gambol over the fields and the roadsides with the shepherds, and she danced about like a little demon, so quickly that her partner could hardly keep time with her. But she was so far from pretty, and so badly dressed, even on Sundays, that no boy of Landry's age would dance with her — above all, in public. It was very doubtful whether the swineherds and farm lads, who had not as yet made their first communion, would think her fit to be invited, and the pretty country girls were not at all anxious to have her dance in the same set with them. Landry felt it very humiliating to be engaged to such a partner, and when he remembered that he had asked the fair Madelon to dance at least three times with him, he wondered how she would take the affront which he should be forced to offer her by failing to claim his privilege.

As he was cold and hungry, and felt in continual dread of seeing the sprite in full pursuit, he strode along without thinking much, and without looking behind. As soon as he reached home he dried himself, and told his family how he had not been able to distinguish the ford because of the darkness, and how he had been at great trouble to get out of the water; but he was ashamed to confess the fear he had felt, and he did not say a word about the fairy flame or little Fadette. He went to bed, saying to himself that the morrow would be quite soon enough to torment himself about the consequences of his unfortunate adventure; but try as he would, he slept very badly. He dreamed more than fifty times that he saw little Fadette astride of the hobgoblin, which looked like a great red cock holding in one of its claws a horn lantern with a candle inside, the rays of which lighted up all the rush-field. Then little Fadette was changed into a cricket as big as a goat, and kept shouting to him in a cricket's voice a song which he could not understand, but in which he kept distinguishing words which rhymed, "sprite, light, mate, late, pack, back." The noise split his head, and the flame of the will-o'-the-wisp seemed so vivid and restless that when he woke up he still saw those little balls, black, red, or blue, which dance before our eyes when we have looked too steadily at the disks of the sun or moon.

Landry was so tired out by his bad night that he dozed all through the mass, and did not hear a word of the sermon, though the good *curé* praised and glorified to the full the virtues and charity of St. Andoche. As he went out of the church, Landry was so overcome with drowsiness that he had forgotten Fadette. Yet there she was, in front of the porch, right next the fair Madelon, who was standing there, quite certain that the first invitation would be for her. But as he approached to speak to her he could not help seeing the Cricket, who took a step in advance with unparalleled assurance, and said to him in a loud voice:

"Come, Landry, last evening you asked me for the first dance, and I trust that we are not going to miss it."

Landry grew red as fire, and seeing that Madelon blushed, too, with astonishment and indignation at such an adventure, he plucked up courage against little Fadette.

"I may have promised to dance with you, Cricket," he said to her; "but I had asked another before you, and your turn will come after I have kept my first engagement."

"Not at all," rejoined Fadette boldly. "Your memory is at fault, Landry, since the promise that I claim was made last year, and last night you only renewed it. If Madelon is anxious to dance with you to-day, there is your twin, who is exactly like you, and she may take him in your place. One is as good as the other."

"The Cricket is right," answered Madelon, proudly, taking Sylvinet's hand; "since you have made so old a promise, you must keep it, Landry. I had just as lief dance with your brother."

"Yes, yes; it is just the same thing," said Sylvinet artlessly; "we can all four of us dance."

Landry was obliged to consent in order to escape the attention of the crowd, and the Cricket began to skip with so much elation and agility that no one ever kept better step and time. If she had been pretty and attractive, it would have been a pleasure to see her, for she danced admirably, and there was not a pretty girl present who would not have been glad to possess her lightness and ease; but the poor Cricket was so badly dressed that she appeared ten times uglier than usual. Landry dared no longer look at Madelon, for he felt grieved and humiliated by his conduct toward her, and he watched his partner, whom he thought more hideous than in the rags she wore every day: she had tried to improve herself, and her bravery was only ridiculous.

Her cap was quite yellow from being long packed away, and instead of being small and well tucked up behind, according to the new fashion in our country, it had two large flat flaps on each side of her head, and in the back the cape fell down over her neck, so that she looked like her grandmother, and her head seemed as big as a bushel basket on top of a little throat as slender as a wand. Her coarse woolen petticoat was two fingers too short, and as she had grown a good deal in the past year, her lean sunburnt arms stuck out of her sleeves like spiders' legs. She wore a crimson apron, of which she was very proud; but she had inherited it from her mother, and had never thought of taking off the bib, which young girls had not worn for ten full years. She was no coquette, poor girl, and it would have been better for her if she had been; for she lived like a boy, with no thought for her person, and caring for nothing but laughter and games. Now she looked like an old woman in Sunday garb, and she was despised for her ugly attire, which was not the result of poverty, but of the grandmother's avarice and the granddaughter's lack of taste.

CHAPTER XV

SYLVINET thought it strange that his twin had taken such a fancy to Fadette, whom he himself disliked still more than Landry did. Landry could not explain the situation, and wished that the earth would swallow him. Madelon was much displeased, and in spite of the animation Fadette lent to the dance, their faces were as melancholy as if they were at a funeral.

After the first dance Landry stole off and went to hide in his orchard. But in a moment little Fadette, accompanied by the Grasshopper, who was more noisy and outrageous than usual, because of a peacock's feather and a gilt tassel in his cap, came to hunt him up, and brought with her a band of little ragged children; for the girls of her own age would have nothing to do with her. When Landry saw her coming with all this crew, whom she expected to use as witnesses in case of his refusal, he submitted and led her under the walnut-trees, looking anxiously for a corner where he could dance with her without exciting remark. Fortunately for him, he did not see Sylvinet or Madelon, or the people of the neighborhood, and he was thankful to profit by the opportunity and dance for the third time with Fadette. There were only strangers about, who paid no attention to them.

As soon as the dance was over, he ran to invite Madelon to share some porridge with him under the trees; but she had been dancing with other young men, and had promised to allow them to treat her, and so she refused rather disdainfully. Then, when she saw that he kept in a corner, and that his eyes were full of tears,—because he thought her spite and vexation made her look prettier than ever before, and noticed that everybody else was admiring her too, she finished eating quickly, and said aloud, as she rose from table :

" Vespers are ringing now, and whom am I going to dance with afterward ? "

She turned toward Landry, expecting him to answer immediately :

" With me ! "

But before he could open his lips, other young men presented themselves, and Madelon, without deigning to give him one pitying or reproachful look, went off to vespers with her new admirers.

As soon as vespers were over, Madelon started off with Pierre Aubardeau, followed by Jean Aladenise and Etienne Alaphilippe, and danced with one after the other; for she could not want attention, as she was a pretty girl and not without property. Landry watched her out of the corners of his eyes, while little Fadette stayed in the church after the others had gone, repeating long prayers; for such was her habit, as some said, because of her great piety, and as others said, to hide her game with the devil.

Landry was very sorry that Madelon paid no attention to him, that she was as red as a poppy with pleasure, and that she had already forgotten the affront he had been forced to offer her. He then perceived what had not before occurred to him,—that she might possibly be a coquette, and that, in any case, she could not be much attached to him since she enjoyed herself so much without him.

It is true that he knew he was in the wrong toward her, at least to all appearance; but she had seen his distress when they were under the walnut-trees, and she might have guessed that there was something under it all which he would be glad to explain to her. She cared not at all, however, and was as gay as a young kid, while his own heart was bursting with grief.

After she had danced with her three partners, Landry went up to her, trying to speak to her in private in order to clear himself as best he might. He did not know how to draw her aside, for he was still at the age when young men are shy with women, and could find no appropriate words. He took her hand to lead her away, and then she said to him, with an air of mingled petulance and forgiveness:

"Well, Landry, are you really going to ask me to dance, after all?"

"Not to dance," said he; for he did not know how to act a part, and had no idea of breaking his word; "but to tell you something to which you cannot refuse to listen."

"Oh, if you have a secret to tell me, Landry, it will do for another time," answered Madelon, pulling away her hand. "To-day is the day for dancing and amusement. I am not tired yet; and since the Cricket has exhausted you, go to bed, if you want. I am going to stay."

Thereupon she accepted the invitation of Germain Andoux, who came up to ask her to dance; and as she turned her back to Landry, he heard Germain say of him:

"That boy seems to think this dance is for him."

"Perhaps," said Madelon, tossing her head; "but he need not think that he has me under his thumb."

Landry was much shocked by this expression, and stayed near the dancers to watch Madelon's manners, which were not positively rude, but so arrogant and defiant that he felt vexed. When she approached him again, and saw that he looked at her with mocking eyes, she said to him in bravado:

"Well, Landry, you cannot find a partner to-day. I declare that you will be obliged to return to the Cricket."

"I shall return to her with a good grace," answered Landry; "for if she is not the prettiest girl here, she is certainly the best dancer."

Then he ran off to look round the church for little Fadette, and brought her back to the dance, right opposite Madelon, and danced twice with her in the same place. It was pleasant to see how proud and happy the Cricket was! She did not attempt to hide her satisfaction; her roguish black eyes glistened, and she threw back her little head crowned with its great cap like a crested hen.

As ill luck would have it, her triumph gave annoyance to five or six little ragamuffins who were in the habit of dancing with her. They had never snubbed her, but had always admired her on account of her good dancing ; and when they now found it impossible to approach her, they began to criticize her, to accuse her of being high and mighty, and to whisper loud enough for her to hear :

"See the Cricket trying to bewitch Landry Barbeau!"

And then followed a shower of abusive nicknames, after the manner of the country.

CHAPTER XVI

THEN, whenever little Fadette passed near them, they would pull her sleeve, or stick out a foot to trip her up, and, among the youngest and roughest, there were even some who hit the flap of her cap, and knocked it from one ear to the other, crying out:

"Hurrah for Mother Fadet's big helmet!"

The poor child struck out five or six times to right and left; but it served only to call attention in her direction, and the people who knew her began to say:

"Only see how lucky our Cricket is to-day that Landry Barbeau dances with her all the time! She certainly dances well, but she is putting on the airs of a pretty girl, and struts about like a magpie."

Some of them said to Landry:

"Has she really bewitched you, poor Landry, that you look at nobody else? Or do you want to learn magic, and let us see you soon driving the wolves to pasture?"

Landry was mortified; but Sylvinet, who thought his brother the finest fellow in the world, was still more so when he saw him the laughing-stock of everybody, even of the strangers who began to take an interest in what was going on. They kept asking questions, and said:

"He is a good-looking fellow, but it is odd that he should make up to the very ugliest girl in the whole place."

Madelon came up triumphantly to listen to all these jeers, and joined in them without mercy:

"What can you expect?" said she; "Landry is still a little child, and at his age, if a boy finds a girl to speak to, he does not care whether she is a scarecrow or whether she looks like a Christian."

Sylvinet took Landry by the arm, and said to him in a low tone:

"Come home, brother, or else we shall be drawn into a quarrel; they are making fun of us, and any insult offered to little Fadette reflects on you. I do not know what made you think of dancing with her to-day four or five times in succession. It looks as if you were trying to make people laugh at you. Do stop amusing yourself in this way. She may expose herself to the harshness and scorn of the crowd, if she chooses; she likes that sort of thing, and has a taste for it, but we have not. Let us go off; we will come back after the angelus, and you can dance with Madelon, who is a well-behaved girl. I have always told you that you were too fond of dancing, and that your love for it would lead you into some folly."

Landry followed for a few steps, but turned on hearing a great uproar, and saw that Madelon and the other girls had given up little Fadette to the derision of their young men, and that some little rogues, encouraged by the laughter they excited, had just knocked off her cap. Her long, black hair was streaming down over her shoulders, and she was struggling in her rage and distress. She had said nothing deserving such ill-treatment, and was crying with anger, unable to recover her cap, which a naughty boy was in the act of carrying off on the end of a stick.

Landry was indignant, and rebelling against such injustice, he caught hold of the ragamuffin, and snatched away the cap, and then the stick, making use of it to administer a sound drubbing. Then he went back to the rest, who fled at his approach; and taking the poor Cricket by the hand, he returned her cap to her.

Landry's vigorous action, and the terror of the little boys, made the spectators laugh heartily. They applauded Landry; but Madelon turned the tide against him, and there were some boys of Landry's age, and even some who were older than he, who seemed to be laughing at his expense.

Landry was no longer mortified; he was conscious of his strength and courage, and a certain feeling of manhood told him that he was doing his duty in saving a woman from ill-treatment, whether she were pretty or ugly, big or little, so long as he had taken her for his partner in the presence of the whole company. He observed the manner in which Madelon's friends were staring at him, and he strode straight up to Aladenise and Alaphilippe, and said to them:

"What have the rest of you to say to me? If I think fit to pay attention to that girl, what business is it of yours? If you have any objection, why do you turn away and whisper about it? Am not I here in front of you, and do not you see me? Somebody said that I was a little child; but there is not a man present, or even a big boy, who dare say it to my face. I am waiting for you to speak, and then we shall see whether anybody will molest the girl who dances with a little child like me."

Sylvinet had not left his brother's side, and although he did not approve the grounds of the quarrel, he was ready to maintain it. Four or five of the young men were a head taller than the twins; but as they saw them so resolute, and were themselves reluctant to fight on such small provocation, they did not breathe a word, but looked at one another to see which meant to measure his strength with Landry. No one stepped forward, and Landry, who had not let go Fadette's hand, said to her:

"Put on your cap quickly, Fanchon, and let us dance, so that I can see if anybody will try to take it off."

"No," said little Fadette, drying her tears. "I have danced enough to-day, and I will not hold you to the rest."

"No, no; we must dance again," said Landry, who was all aflame with pride and courage. "No one shall say that you cannot dance with me without being insulted."

He made her dance again, and nobody said a word to him, or looked at him askance. Madelon and her admirers had gone off to dance in another place. After the dance was over, little Fadette said to Landry in a low tone:

"Now I have had enough, Landry; I am satisfied with you, and I let you off your promise. I am going home, and you may dance this evening with whom you please."

She ran after her little brother, who was quarreling with the other children, and then disappeared so quickly that Landry could not even see which way she went.

Landry ate his supper at home with his brother. He found Sylvinet so despondent over what had happened that he told him how he had encountered the will-o'-the-wisp on the previous evening, and how little Fadette had saved him, either by courage or magic, and, as her reward, had asked him to dance with her seven times on the feast of St. Andoche. He said nothing of the rest, as he was unwilling to admit how terribly he had feared the possibility of finding Sylvinet drowned the year before; and he did wisely, for the evil ideas which children sometimes take into their heads are apt to return if people pay too much attention to such things, or even mention them.

Sylvinet was glad that his brother had kept his word, and told Landry that the annoyance he had suffered only increased his respect for him. Though he was terrified at the thought of Landry's peril in the river, he felt no gratitude toward little Fadette. She was so repulsive to him that he was unwilling to believe she had met his brother by accident, or helped him out of kindness.

"It is she," said he, "who conjured up the sprite to confuse your brain, and make you drown; but God would not allow her to succeed, because you were not then, and never have been, in a state of deadly sin. That bad Cricket, abusing your good nature and gratitude, cajoled you into a promise which she knew would prove troublesome and hurtful to you. That girl is very wicked; all witches love evil, and they are all bad. She knew that she would get you into trouble with Madelon and your respectable acquaintances. She wanted to make you fight, too; and if God had not protected you against her for the second time, you might have been drawn into a serious quarrel, and have fallen into misfortune."

Landry was in the habit of seeing things through his brother's eyes, and thinking that Sylvinet might be in the right, did not attempt to defend Fadette against him. They talked together of the will-o'-the-wisp, which Sylvinet had never beheld, and which he was very curious to hear of, without the slightest desire to see it. They dared not speak of it to their mother, for the bare thought of it alarmed her; nor to their father, for he laughed at it, and had seen it twenty times without paying any attention to it.

The dancing was to continue till late at night, but Landry, sick at heart because he had broken with Madelon, was unwilling to profit by the freedom which Fadette had allowed him, and went to help his brother drive the cattle home from pasture. The road brought him half way to the Priche, and as his head was aching, he said good-night to his brother at the end of the rush-field. Sylvinet was unwilling to let him cross the ford of the Roulettes, lest the will-o'-the-wisp or the Cricket should play him some evil turn. He made him promise to go the longest way, round by the foot-bridge near the big mill.

Landry followed his brother's wishes, and instead of crossing the rush-field, he went along the wooded pathway that skirts the side of Chaumois Hill. He was not afraid, because the noise of merriment still lingered in the air. He heard at a distance the bagpipes and the shouts of the dancers at the festival, and he was aware that spirits work no spells when the neighborhood is not asleep.

When he reached the foot of the hill, he heard something sobbing and crying beside the road. At first he took it for the curlew, but as he drew nearer, he was sure that the voice was human, and as his courage never failed him when he had to deal with beings of his own kind, especially those in need of help, he jumped down into the most sunken part of the road.

The person who was weeping became silent at the sound of his footsteps.

"Who is crying here?" he asked in a resolute voice.

Nobody answered.

"Is there a sick person here?" said he again.

As there was no reply, he was about to go ahead; but he wished first to search among the stones and the big thistles which obstructed the place, and he soon saw by the light of the rising moon a figure stretched out at length on the ground, the feet toward him, motionless as a dead body; and he was at first uncertain whether it were really one, or a living person who had flung herself down there in great affliction, and, to escape detection, did not stir.

As yet Landry had never seen or touched a dead body. The idea that this might be one caused him great emotion; but he overcame it, because he thought it his duty to help his neighbor, and he walked up resolutely to feel the hand of the person lying there, who, seeing it impossible to avoid recognition, half rose at his approach; and then Landry knew it was little Fadette.

CHAPTER XVII

LANDRY was angry at first to find little Fadette so continually in his path; but as she seemed to be in distress, he took pity on her. This is the conversation they had together:

"Was that you, Cricket, crying so? Did anybody strike you or chase you, that you hid here to weep?"

"No, Landry; nobody has molested me since you protected me so bravely; and, besides, I am not afraid of anybody. I hid here to cry, that is all; for it is very foolish to show your trouble to other people."

"But why are you in such dreadful trouble? Is it because they were so rude to you to-day? It was partly your own fault; but you must forget it, and not lay yourself open to such treatment again."

"Why do you say that it was partly my fault, Landry? Did I insult you by wishing to dance with you; and am I the only girl in the world who has not the right to enjoy herself like the others?"

"That is not what I mean, Fadette; I do not blame you for wanting to dance with me. I did as you wished, and behaved toward you as I should. The wrong you have done dates from further back; and if you are to blame, it is not toward me, but toward yourself."

"No, Landry; as true as I love God, I am not conscious of any such failing; and if I am to blame at all, it is for having caused you so much annoyance, against my will."

"Do not speak of me, Fadette; I am not complaining. Speak of yourself; and since you are not aware of your own faults, are you willing to let me tell them to you, in good faith and friendship?"

"Yes, Landry, I am willing; and I shall think it the best reward or the best punishment you can give me for the ill I have done you."

"Well, Fanchon Fadet, since you are speaking seriously, and since for the first time in your life you are gentle and sweet-tempered, I am going to tell you why it is that you do not receive as much respect as a girl of sixteen is entitled to. There is nothing like a girl about you, and your manners and appearance are just like a boy's; and then you take no care of your person. In the first place, you do not look neat and clean, and your dress and your way of speaking make you seem ugly. You know that the children call you by a much worse name than Cricket. They often call you the "Tomboy." Well, do you think it is nice not to look like a girl at sixteen? You climb trees like a regular squirrel, and when you jump on a mare without saddle or bridle, you gallop off as if the devil were after you. It is a good thing to be strong and agile; it is a good thing, too, to be afraid of nothing, and it is a natural advantage for a man. But for a woman there is such a thing as too much, and you seem to want to attract attention. So people stare at you, tease you, and shout at you as they do at a wolf. You are clever, and give sharp answers, which are amusing to those whom you are not trying to provoke. It is a good thing, again, to be cleverer than other people; but if your wit is too apparent, you will make enemies. You are inquisitive, and when you have found out other people's secrets, you cast them in their faces very cruelly the moment you have any cause for complaint. So people fear you; if they fear you, they will hate you, and will give worse than they get. In short, whether you are a witch or not,—and I am willing to believe that you have uncommon knowledge, although I hope you have not tampered with evil spirits,—you try to make people believe that you are one, in order to terrify your enemies; and you are earning a very unenviable reputation by so doing. These are your faults, Fanchon Fadet, and it is because of these faults that nobody likes you. Think it over a little, and you will see that if you are willing to be more like the rest of us, people will be more apt to appreciate your superior intelligence."

"I thank you, Landry," answered little Fadette, very earnestly, after listening religiously to all that the twin had to say. "You have found fault with me like everybody else, but you have done so with tact and kindness, and that is more than others do; but now will you let me answer you, and that I may do so, will you sit down by my side for just a moment?"

"It is not a very nice place," said Landry, who was not particularly anxious to stay with her, and who was still thinking of the evil spells she was accused of casting over those least expecting them.

"You do not think it a nice place," answered she, "because you rich people are hard to please. You must have soft turf to sit on, out of doors, and in your meadows and gardens you can choose the most beautiful spots and the thickest shade. But those who have nothing do not ask so much of God, and use the first stone they meet as a pillow for their heads. Thorns do not wound their feet, and wherever they are, they observe everything that is attractive and lovely in heaven and on earth. No place is ugly to those who understand the virtues and sweetness of everything that God has made. Without being a witch, I know the uses of the smallest herbs which you crush underfoot, and when I understand what they are good for, I take pleasure in them, and despise neither their perfume nor their form. I say this, Landry, so that I may now tell you something else, which relates to Christian souls as well as to garden flowers and roadside weeds: it is that we are too apt to despise what appears to be neither good nor beautiful, and thus we lose what is helpful and salutary."

"I do not understand very well what you mean," said Landry, sitting down beside her.

Neither spoke for a minute, for little Fadette's mind had soared away to ideas unknown to Landry; and although his own head was somewhat confused, he could not help listening with pleasure to the girl; for he had never heard a voice so sweet or thoughts so well expressed as the voice and thoughts of little Fadette at that moment.

"Listen, Landry," said she to him. "I am more to be pitied than blamed; and if I have wronged myself, I have at least never done serious harm to others, and if people were more just and reasonable, they would pay more attention to my good heart than to my ugly face and shabby clothes. Think a minute, or let me tell you if you do not know it already, what my life has been since I was born. I shall speak no ill of my poor mother, whom everybody insults and blames, although she is away and cannot defend herself, and I am powerless to help her; for I do not even know how greatly she sinned, or how much she was tempted. Well, the world is so evil that just after my mother had left me, while I was still weeping bitterly for her loss, at the least quarrel the other children had with me, whether it were over a game or a mere nothing, which they would have easily forgiven one another, they cast my mother's shame in my face, and tried to make me blush for her. In my place, perhaps, a sensible girl, such as you describe, would have been abashed into silence, thinking it prudent to abandon the cause of her mother, and to let her suffer the insults which she herself thus escaped. But, you see, I could not do so. It was more than I could stand. My mother is always my mother; and no matter what she is, and whether I ever see her again, or whether I never hear of her any more, I shall always love her with my whole heart. So, when they call me the child of a camp-follower and a *vivandière,* I am angry, not on my own account,—for I know that it cannot hurt me, as I have done no wrong,—but because of that poor dear woman whom it is my duty to defend. And, as I cannot defend her, for I do not know how, I take my revenge by showing them that they are no better than my mother, at whom they cast their stones. That is why they say that I am inquisitive and impertinent, and that I try to find out their secrets in order to make them public. It is true that God made me inquisitive, if you call it inquisitive to wish to know hidden things; but if I had been kindly and decently treated, I should not have thought of satisfying my curiosity at the expense of my neighbor. I should have confined my amusement to learning such secrets for the cure of the human body as my grandmother teaches me. Flowers, herbs, stones, insects,—all the secrets of nature would have furnished me with enough occupation and pleasure. As I love to roam about and examine everything, I might have been alone all the time without knowing what it is to be bored; for my greatest pleasure is to go off to those spots which nobody knows, and to spend my time there in dreaming of fifty things which I have never even heard mentioned by people who think themselves very wise and thoughtful. If I have allowed myself to have dealings with acquaintances, it is because I was anxious to help them with the little knowledge I have acquired for myself, and out of which my grandmother often makes her own profit, without a word. When I healed the wounds and ailments of the children of my own age, and taught them my remedies without the least thought of payment, instead of thanking me, they treated me like a witch; and those who came to ask my advice very politely when they stood in need of my services, were very rude to me the next time they found an opportunity.

"That made me angry, and I might have done them harm; for if I know helpful things, I know hurtful things as well; but I have never been willing to use them; I do not bear malice, and if I revenge myself in words, it is because I feel relieved by saying immediately what comes to the tip of my tongue, and then I forgive and forget, according to God's commandment. If I take no care of my person and manners, it should teach you that I am not such a fool as to think myself pretty, when I know that I am so ugly that nobody can bear the sight of me. I have heard so often enough to be sure of it; and when I see how harsh and disdainful people are to those who have few of the good gifts of God, I take pleasure in shocking them, and comfort myself in the thought that my face cannot be repulsive to God or to my guardian angel, who will no more object to it in me than I object to receiving it from them. I do not belong to those who say: 'There is a caterpillar,—an ugly brute,—oh, how hideous it is! We must kill it!' I do not crush God's poor creature; and if the caterpillar fall into the water, I hold out a leaf to it to save its life. On account of this, they say I like noxious creatures, and that

I am a witch, because I do not like to hurt a frog, to pull off the legs of a wasp, or to nail a bat against a tree. 'Poor creature,' I say, 'if every ugly thing ought to die, I should have no more right to live than you!'"

CHAPTER XVIII

SOMEHOW or other, Landry was moved by the way in which little Fadette spoke so humbly and quietly of her ugliness, and calling to mind her face, which he could not see in the darkness of the night, he said to her, without a thought of flattery:

"But, Fadette, you are not so ugly as you think you are, or as you try to make out. There are other girls far more unattractive than you, whom no one criticizes."

"Whether I am a little less ugly or positively hideous, Landry, you cannot say that I am a pretty girl. Come, do not try to comfort me; for I do not feel badly about it."

"Who knows how you would look if you were well dressed, and had on a cap like other girls! There is one thing that everybody says, and that is, that if your nose were not so short, and your mouth were not so large, and your skin were not so dark, you would not be at all bad looking; for they say, too, that there is not another pair of eyes like yours in all the country round, and if their expression were not so bold and sarcastic, anybody would like to have a kind look out of them."

Landry spoke thus without being much aware of what he was saying. He found himself recalling the good and bad points of little Fadette, and, for the first time, he paid more attention to the subject than he would have thought possible a few minutes earlier. She noticed it, though she pretended not to do so; for she was too clever to take it seriously.

"My eyes look kindly on everything that is good," said she, "and with pity on what is not. I do not mind displeasing people who do not please me, and I cannot imagine how all those pretty girls whom I see courted, are so coquettish toward everybody, as if everybody were to their taste. As for me, if I were pretty, I should wish only to be admired and thought attractive by the one person I cared about."

Landry's mind reverted to Madelon; but little Fadette did not let his thoughts rest. She went on:

"All the wrong I have done to other people, then, Landry, is that I never asked their pity or indulgence for my ugliness, but showed it without any attempt at embellishment or disguise; and that is such a great offense that they forget how I have often done them a good turn, and never a bad one. On the other hand, even if I took care of my appearance, how should I find money for finery? Have I ever begged, although I have not a penny to my name? Does my grandmother give me anything except board and lodging? And if I don't know how to make the best of the poor rags my mother left me,—is it my fault, as long as nobody has ever taught me, and as I have been left to myself since I was ten years old, with nobody to love or care for me? I know the fault that people find with me, though you have been kind enough not to speak of it. They say that I am sixteen, and could very well take a situation, and that then I should have wages and money enough to support myself; but that my love of idleness and doing as I please keeps me with my grandmother, though she is not at all fond of me, and has plenty of means to hire a servant."

"Well, Fadette, is that not true?" said Landry.

"You are blamed for not liking to work, and even your grandmother says to anybody who is willing to listen to her, that it would be an advantage to her to keep a servant in your place."

"My grandmother says that because she likes to scold and complain. But whenever I talk of leaving her, she insists upon my staying, because she knows very well that I am more useful to her than she cares to admit. Her eyes are not so good, nor her legs so young, as they once were to help her in her search for herbs, some of which grow far away in very inaccessible places, and are necessary for her potions and powders. Besides, I have already told you that I can find in herbs virtues she knows nothing of, and she is much astonished when she sees the good effect of the medicines I compound. Our animals are in such fine condition that everybody is surprised, as it is known we have no pasturage except that of the parish. My grandmother is well aware to whom she owes the fine wool of her sheep and the good milk of her goats. I can tell you that she is not anxious to let me go, and I am worth more than I cost her. I love my grandmother, although she is cross to me and deprives me of many things. But I have another reason for not leaving her, and I will tell it if you want to hear it, Landry."

"Very well, tell it to me," answered Landry, who was not weary of listening to Fadette.

"When I was only ten years old, my mother left to my care a poor ugly child, as ugly as I am, and still more unfortunate, because he has been a cripple from his birth, puny, sickly, and always in some trouble or mischief, as he is always suffering, poor fellow! And everybody torments him, repulses him, and calls him names, poor Grasshopper! My grandmother scolds him roughly, and would beat him if I did not protect him against her, and pretend to thrash him in her place. But I always take great care not to hurt him in earnest, and he knows it very well! As soon as he does wrong, he runs to hide in my petticoats, and says to me: 'Beat me before my grandmother gets hold of me!' And then I beat him in fun, and the little rascal pretends to cry. Then I look after him. I cannot always keep him from being in rags, poor child; but whenever I have any kind of a garment, I make it over for him, and I cure him when he is ill, whereas my grandmother would kill him, for she does not know how to take care of children; so I preserve this poor little wretch's life, and if I were not here, he would be very unhappy, and would soon lie in the ground beside my poor father, whom I could not keep from dying. I do not know whether I do the poor boy a kindness by keeping him alive, crooked as he is in body and mind; but I cannot help myself. And when I think of going out to service, Landry, so as to have some money of my own, and to escape my present poverty, my heart is ready to burst with pity, and accuses me as if I were my little Grasshopper's mother, and were letting him die by some fault of mine. Now, I have told you all my faults and failings, Landry. May God be my judge! As for me, I forgive all those who misunderstand me."

CHAPTER XIX

LANDRY had listened to little Fadette with conflicting emotions, and without finding anything to contradict in the reasons she gave. At last the way in which she spoke of her little brother, the Grasshopper, greatly affected him, and he suddenly felt such a liking for her that he would have defended her against all the world.

"This time, Fadette, whoever finds fault with you deserves to be blamed first himself; for everything you have said is very just, and nobody suspects you of having such a good heart and sound judgment. Why do you not show yourself for what you are? Then nobody would speak ill of you, and some people would do you justice."

"I have already told you, Landry, that I do not care to please those who do not please me."

"If you tell this to me, you must mean—"

There Landry stopped, surprised at what he was on the point of saying; and then he resumed:

"So you must feel more good-will toward me than toward others? I always thought you hated me because I never was kind to you."

"Perhaps I did hate you a little," answered Fadette; "but if I did, I shall never hate you again after to-day, and I am going to tell you why, Landry. I thought you were proud, and so you are; but you are able to overcome your pride for the sake of your duty, and deserve the greater praise. I thought you were ungrateful, and though the pride which you have been taught inclines you toward ingratitude, you are so true to your word that you keep it at all cost; then, too, I thought you a coward, and almost despised you for it; but I see you are only superstitious, and that you are never wanting in courage when you have a real danger to face. You danced with me to-day, though it was humiliating to you. You even came after vespers to look for me in the church, just as I had said my prayers, and had forgiven you in my heart and determined not to torment you any more. You protected me against those naughty children, and challenged the big boys who would have maltreated me if it had not been for you; and this evening, when you heard me crying, you came to help and comfort me. Do not think, Landry, that I shall ever forget these things. You may be sure all your life that I shall remember them; and in your turn, you may ask of me whatever you want at any time. Now, to begin with, I know that I have caused you serious trouble today. Yes, I know it, Landry, and I am witch enough to guess something about you of which I was quite ignorant this morning. You may be certain than I am more mischievous than unkind, and that if I had known that you were in love with Madelon, I should not have stirred up strife between you, as I did by forcing you to dance with me. It amused me, I confess, to see you neglect a pretty girl in order to dance with an ugly one like me, but I thought it was only a smart to your vanity. As I gradually understood that your heart was really wounded, and that in spite of yourself you watched Madelon, and were ready to cry when you saw how angry she was, I cried myself. Honestly, I cried just as you were going to fight with her admirers, and you thought I was shedding tears of repentance. That is the reason I was still crying so bitterly when you came upon me here by accident, and I shall cry over it until I can repair the harm I have done to such a good fellow as I know you to be."

"Suppose, poor Fanchon," said Landry, much moved by the tears she was beginning to shed afresh,—"suppose you have caused some trouble between me and a girl with whom you think I am in love, what could you do to set it right?"

"Trust me, Landry," answered little Fadette. "I am clever enough to make a satisfactory explanation. Madelon shall know that I am to blame for everything. If she does not take you back into her favor to-morrow, it will be because she has never loved you, and—"

"And then I ought not to regret her, Fanchon; and as she has never loved me, you would really be taking pains for nothing. Leave it alone, and forget the little vexation you caused me; I am already cured of it."

"Such wounds are not so easily healed," answered little Fadette; then, recollecting herself, she went on: "At least they say so. You are talking so out of pique, Landry. When you have slept on it, and to-morrow comes, you will be very sad until you have made your peace with pretty Madelon."

"Perhaps," said Landry; "but now I stake my word upon it that I do not understand what you mean, and think no more about it. I fancy it is you who want to make me believe that I am in love with her; but if I did care for her, it was so little that I have almost forgotten it."

"That is strange," said little Fadette, with a sigh. "Is that the way you boys love?"

"You girls do not love a whit better, since you are so easily offended, and console yourselves so quickly with the first man who comes along. But we are speaking of things which perhaps we do not as yet understand,—at least I do not think you do, little Fadette,—you, who are always laughing at lovers. I think that you are making fun of me by trying to patch up my quarrel with Madelon. Do nothing about it, I tell you; for she might think that I sent you, and then she would make a mistake. And she might be angry if she thought I were presenting myself in the light of her declared lover; for the truth is that I never said a word of love to her, and if I took pleasure in her society and in dancing with her, she never inspired me with the courage to tell it to her. So let us leave it alone. She will get over it herself, if she wishes;

and if she does not get over it, I do not think it will kill me."

"I know what you think, better than you do yourself, Landry," answered little Fadette. "I believe you when you say that you have never told Madelon of your love in words, but she would be very stupid if she had not read it in your eyes,—above all, to-day. Since I was the cause of your quarrel, I must also be the cause of your reconciliation, and it will be a good opportunity to let Madelon know that you love her. It will be my part to tell her, and I shall do it so delicately and with so much tact that she cannot accuse you of having instigated me. Yes, Landry, you may trust little Fadette, the poor Cricket, whose heart is not so ugly as her face; and forgive her for having tormented you, for you will reap a great reward in the end. You will know that if it is sweet to have the love of a pretty girl, it is useful to have the friendship of an ugly one; for ugly girls are disinterested, and never feel spite or malice."

"Whether you are pretty or ugly, Fanchon," said Landry, taking her hand, "I think that I already understand that your friendship is a very good thing—so good that love is perhaps poor in comparison. I know that you are very good-natured; for I have been very rude to you to-day, and you have paid no attention to it; and though you say I have behaved well toward you, I myself know that my conduct has been very wrong."

"How can that be, Landry? I do not know what you mean."

"Because I did not kiss you once in the dance, Fanchon, though it was both my duty and my privilege, since it is the custom. I treated you as young men treat little girls ten years old, whom they will not condescend to kiss, and yet you are almost my age. So I really insulted you, and if you were not a kind girl, you would have noticed it."

"I never even thought of it," said little Fadette; and she rose quickly, for she felt that she was lying, and she did not wish him to know it. "Come," said she, making an effort to appear gay, "listen to the crickets chirping in the stubble; they are calling me by my name, and there is an owl over there hooting the hour which the stars mark on heaven's dial."

"I hear it too, and I must go home to the Priche; but before I say good-night, will you not tell me that you forgive me?"

"But I bear you no grudge, Landry, and I have nothing to forgive."

"Yes," said Landry, who was moved by an indefinable emotion as she spoke to him of love and friendship in a voice so sweet that that of the bullfinches drowsily twittering in the bushes seemed harsh in comparison,—"yes, you have something to forgive, and you must let me kiss you now to make amends for not having done it to-day."

Fadette trembled a little; then, immediately regaining her equanimity:

"You want me to make you do penance for your fault. Well, I let you off, my boy. It was quite enough to dance with an ugly girl; it would be too much virtue to insist upon kissing her."

"Do not say that," exclaimed Landry, catching her by the hand and arm at the same time. "I do not think it can be a penance to kiss you — unless you feel distaste and scorn for it, coming as it does from me."

As soon as he had spoken, he was conscious of such a desire to kiss little Fadette that he trembled with fear lest she should not consent.

"Listen, Landry," she said in her sweet, caressing voice; "if I were pretty, I should tell you that it is neither the place nor the hour for kissing, as if in secret. If I were a flirt, I should think, on the contrary, that this is both the place and the hour; because the night hides my ugliness, and there is nobody here to make you ashamed of your vagary. But I am neither pretty nor a flirt, and this is what I say: 'Shake hands with me in token of our honest friendship, and I shall be happy,—I, who have never known what friendship is, and who shall never ask it of another.'"

"Yes," said Landry, "I shake hands with you with all my heart—do you hear, Fadette? But the most honest friendship, such as mine for you, need not stand in the way of our kissing. If you deny me this test, I shall believe that you still have some grudge against me."

Then he tried to kiss her unawares; but she drew back, and as he persisted, she began to cry, saying:

"Go away, Landry; you give me great pain."

Landry stopped in astonishment, and was so vexed to see her in tears, that he was almost angry.

"I see," said he; "you are not telling me the truth when you say my friendship is the only one you wish for. You have another, and a stronger, which forbids your kissing me."

"No, Landry," she answered, sobbing; "but I am afraid that if you kiss me at night without seeing me, you will hate me when you see me again by daylight."

"Have I never seen you?" cried Landry impatiently, "and cannot I see you now? Come a little this way into the moonlight. Now I can see you distinctly, and I do not know whether you are ugly or not; but I love your face because I love you, and that is all I can say."

Then he kissed her, trembling at first, but afterward he kept on so eagerly that she was frightened, and pushed him away, saying:

"That is enough, Landry! I begin to think that you are kissing me in anger, or that you are thinking of Madelon. Be calm; I shall speak to her to-morrow, and you will find more enjoyment in kissing her than any I can give you."

Thereupon she scrambled quickly up the bank, and went off with a light step.

Landry was infatuated, and longed to run after her. He started three times in pursuit, before deciding to go down toward the river. Finally, thinking that the devil was after him, he began to run, and never stopped till he reached the Priche.

The next day, he went to look after his oxen at the early dawn, and as he was feeding them and stroking them, his thoughts recurred to the conversation he had had with little Fadette in the Chaumois road, and which, though it had lasted a whole hour, had seemed to him but a moment. His head was heavy with sleep, and his mind was wearied by the fatigue of a day which had turned out so contrary to his expectation. He was troubled and frightened by what he had felt for this girl, who came back to his mind, ugly and ill-dressed as he had always known her. Now and then he thought that he must have dreamed his desire to kiss her, especially when he recalled his happiness in pressing her to his heart, and the great affection he had felt for her, just as if she had suddenly become the prettiest and dearest girl in the world.

"She must be a sorceress, as they say she is, although she denies it," thought he; "for surely she bewitched me last evening, and I never in my life felt such intense love for father, mother, sister, or brother, certainly not for the pretty Madelon, and not even for my dear twin Sylvinet, as I did during two or three minutes for that little fiend of a girl. If poor Sylvinet had been able to look into my heart, he would have died of jealousy on the spot. My attachment to Madelon did not interfere with my love for my brother, whereas, if I should be infatuated and excited for one whole day as I was for one moment by Fadette's side, I should lose my senses, and think there was no other person in the world."

Landry felt bursting with shame, fatigue and impatience. He sat down on the manger of his oxen, and trembled lest the little witch had robbed him of his courage, his senses, and his health.

As the day grew lighter the laborers of the Priche came to their work, and began to tease him for dancing with the ugly Cricket; and in their banter they made her out so hideous, so ill-mannered, and so badly dressed that he did not know where to hide his shame both for what had been seen and for what he was careful to keep to himself.

He did not lose his temper, however, for the men of the Priche were all good friends of his, and teased him without any malicious intention. He even had the courage to tell them that they did not know little Fadette; that she was worth more than many other girls; and that she was capable of great kindness. Then they redoubled their raillery.

"I don't speak of her mother," said one; "but she herself is a most stupid child, and if one of your animals is sick, I advise you not to follow her remedies; for she is a little chatterbox, and has no secret art of healing. But apparently she knows how to bewitch boys, for you never left her all the day of St. Andoche; and you had better take care, poor Landry, for you will soon be called the Cricket's cricket, and the sprite's sprite. The devil will be after you. The hobgoblin will come to twitch the sheets off our beds, and tangle our horse's manes. We shall be obliged to have you exorcised."

"I think," said little Solange, "that he must have put on one of his stockings wrong side out yesterday morning. That attracts witches, and little Fadette observed it."

CHAPTER XX

DURING the day, as Landry was busy at his work, he saw little Fadette passing by. She was walking quickly toward a coppice where Madelon was cutting leaves for her sheep. It was the hour for unyoking the oxen, when half their day's work was done, and as Landry was leading them to pasture, he kept watching little Fadette, who ran with such a light foot that she scarcely seemed to touch the grass. He was curious to know what she was going to say to Madelon, and instead of hastening to eat his soup, which was waiting for him in the furrow still hot from the plowshare, he crept noiselessly along the edge of the grove to listen to what was going on between the young girls. He could not see them, and as Madelon muttered her answers, he could not tell what she was saying; but little Fadette's voice, if low, was none the less clear, and though she did not raise it in the least, he did not lose a single syllable. She was speaking of him to Madelon, and telling her, as she had promised Landry, how, ten months before, she had forced him to give his word to be at her disposal whenever she should require it. She explained everything so humbly and sweetly that it was a pleasure to hear her. Then, without mentioning the will-o'-the-wisp or Landry's fear of it, she told how he had come near drowning by attempting the ford of the Roulettes in the wrong place on the eve of St. Andoche. In short, she put everything in the most favorable light, and insisted that all the harm had sprung from her vanity, and her desire to dance with a big boy instead of the little ones who had always been her partners.

Then Madelon, in a rage, raised her voice and said:

"What do I care for all that? You may dance all your life with the twins of the Twinnery; but you must not think, Cricket, that you offend me or make me jealous in the least degree."

Fadette went on:

"Do not speak so cruelly of poor Landry, Madelon; for Landry has given you his heart, and if you will not accept it, he will be sorrier than I can say."

She spoke so prettily, and with so caressing a tone, and with such praise of Landry, that he longed for her powers of speech to use when it should serve his turn, and he blushed with pleasure at hearing himself so commended.

Madelon was amazed, too, at little Fadette's eloquence; but she scorned her too much to let her admiration appear.

"You have a clever tongue, and great boldness," said she. "I might think your grandmother had been teaching you how to wheedle; but I do not like to talk to witches; it is unlucky, so please go away, foolish Cricket. You have found a beau—keep him, my darling; for he is the first and last one who will ever care for your ugly face. As for me, I would not play second fiddle to you,—no, not even for a king's son. Your Landry is a fool, and he must be absolutely worthless, since, when you think you have stolen him from me, you come to beg me to take him back again. A young man whom even little Fadette disdains would make a fine beau for me!"

"If that is what wounds you," answered Fadette in a tone which pierced to the very bottom of Landry's heart, "and if you are so haughty that you will not consent to do justice to him until you have humiliated me, put yourself at ease, beautiful Madelon, and trample under your feet the pride and spirit of the poor little Cricket of the fields. You think that I disdain Landry, or that otherwise I should not beg you to forgive him. Very well, I will tell you, if you wish to know, that I have long loved him; that he is the only boy I have ever thought of, and that perhaps I shall think of him all my life; but I have too much good sense, and also too much pride, to imagine that I can ever make him fall in love with me. I know what he is, and I know what I am. He is handsome, rich, and held in high esteem; I am ugly, poor, and despised. So I know that he is not for me, and you must have seen how he scorned me at the festival. So you may be indeed content; for the man to whom little Fadette dares not so much as lift up her eyes is full of love for you. Punish little Fadette by laughing at her, and by carrying off the friend whom she would not dare take from you. If it may not be for love of him, let it be at least as a punishment for my insolence, and promise me when he comes to make his peace with you, to comfort him and to receive him kindly."

Instead of being moved by so much humility and self-devotion, Madelon showed great harshness, and as she sent little Fadette away, she told her repeatedly to keep possession of Landry; as for her, she considered him a mere child and a fool. But little Fadette's great sacrifice bore its fruit in spite of pretty Madelon's rebuffs. Women's hearts are so made that a young lad seems a man to them as soon as they see him petted and made much of by other women. Madelon, who had never thought very seriously of Landry, began to think of him in earnest as soon as Fadette left her. She remembered all the eloquent little talker had said of Landry's affection, and when she reflected that Fadette had gone so far as to acknowledge herself in love with him, she reveled in the idea of taking her revenge on the poor girl.

She went that evening to the Priche, which was distant only two or three gunshots from her own house, and under pretext of looking up one of her cattle which had strayed off among her uncle's herds, she let Landry catch sight of her, and with a glance encouraged him to come up and speak to her.

Landry understood very well, for his wits were singularly sharpened since his adventure with little Fadette. "Fadette is a witch," thought he; "she has restored me to Madelon's good graces, and has done more for me in a quarter of an hour's conversation than I could do for myself in a year. She is wonderfully clever, and few girls have so kind a heart as she."

As he thought of this, he looked toward Madelon, but his gaze was so tranquil that she withdrew before he had made up his mind to speak to her. He was not exactly bashful in her presence; his shyness had fled, he knew not how; but with his shyness, his delight in her society, and the desire he had once felt to please her, were gone also.

As soon as he had finished supper, he pretended to go to sleep. But he got out of bed on the side next the wall, crept noiselessly along, and set off straight toward the ford of the Roulettes. The will-o'-the-wisp was carrying on its little dance there again that evening. As soon as Landry saw it skipping about, he thought to himself:

"So much the better; the sprite is here, and the sprite's mistress cannot be far off."

He crossed the ford fearlessly, and without making any mistake, and kept on as far as Mother Fadet's house, looking anxiously on every side. He waited a few minutes without seeing a light or hearing a sound. Everybody had gone to bed. He hoped that the Cricket, who was in the habit of taking nocturnal rambles after her grandmother and the Grasshopper had gone to sleep, might be wandering about in the neighborhood; and so he set off in the direction he thought she might have taken. He crossed the rush-field, and went as far as the Chaumois road, whistling and singing aloud to attract attention; but he met only a badger trotting through the stubble, and an owl hooting in a tree-top. He was obliged to go home without finding an opportunity to thank the good friend who had served him so well.

CHAPTER XXI

THE whole week passed without Landry's meeting Fadette, and he grew surprised and anxious.

"She will think me ungrateful," thought he; "but though I have not seen her, it is not because I have not searched and watched for her. I must have hurt her feelings by kissing her the other evening, but I meant no harm, and had no idea of offending her."

He did more thinking this week than ever before in his life; his mind was not clear, but he was thoughtful and excited, and he was obliged to make an effort to work; for the great oxen, the shining plowshare, and the rich red earth, moist with the fine autumnal rains, no longer sufficed for his dreams and meditations.

He went to see his twin on Thursday evening, and found him as troubled as himself. Sylvinet's character was different from his, but sometimes alike by sympathy. He seemed to have guessed that something was disturbing his brother's mind, though he was really far from suspecting the truth. He asked him if he had made peace with Madelon, and Landry told him voluntarily a falsehood for the first time by pretending that he had. In reality, Landry had not said a word to Madelon, and thought he had plenty of time for it; he was in no haste.

Finally, Sunday came round, and Landry was among the first at mass. He entered before the bell had rung, for he knew that it was little Fadette's habit to arrive at that moment to make the long prayers at which everybody laughed. He saw a little figure kneeling in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, the back turned, and the face buried in the hands, as if for greater devotion. It was Fadette's attitude, but it was neither her cap nor her dress, and Landry went out again to see if he could find her in the porch, which we call the place of rags and tatters, because of the ragged beggars who stay there during the service.

Fadette's rags were the only ones he could not find; he listened to the mass without seeing her, and it was only at the preface that, as he watched the girl who was praying so devoutly in the chapel, he saw her raise her head, and then recognized his Cricket, though her dress and air were entirely new to him. They were the same old clothes, the same coarse woolen petticoat, the red apron, and the linen cap untrimmed with lace; but she had cleaned, recut, and made over everything during the week. Her dress was let down to a more suitable length over her stockings, that were very white, as well as her cap, which had taken a modern shape, and sat gracefully on her well-combed black hair; her neckerchief was new, and of a pretty soft yellow color which set off her dark skin. She had lengthened her bodice, and instead of looking like a wooden doll dressed up, her waist was perfectly slender and pliant. Moreover, though I do not know with what juices of flowers and herbs she had washed her face and hands for the past week, her pale face and pretty little hands looked as fresh and soft as the spring hawthorn.

Landry, seeing her so altered, let fall his prayer-book, and, at the noise he made, little Fadette turned quite round, and met his gaze just as he was looking at her. She blushed a little, scarcely pinker than the wild rose in the hedges; but it made her almost beautiful, especially as her black eyes, which nobody had ever been able to criticize, shot out such a brilliant flame that she seemed transfigured. Landry thought again:

"She is a witch; she was ugly, and wished to make herself pretty, and now she is beautiful by a miracle."

He was transfixed with fear, but his fear did not prevent his feeling such a longing to go and speak with her that his heart bounded with impatience until the end of the mass.

But she did not look at him again, and instead of racing and playing with the children after her prayers, she went off so discreetly that she hardly gave people time to observe how much changed she was for the better. Landry dared not follow her, particularly as Sylvinet never took his eyes off him; but an hour later he succeeded in making his escape, and this time, following the guidance of his heart, he found little Fadette tending her flock in the sunken road which is called the *Traîne-au-Gendarme,* because a *gendarme* of the king was killed there in the old times, as he was trying to force the poor people to pay the tax and to do extra duty, contrary to the terms of the law already harsh enough.

CHAPTER XXII

AS it was Sunday, little Fadette was neither sewing nor spinning as she tended the sheep. She was amusing herself with a simple occupation which peasant children sometimes take very seriously. She was looking for the four-leaved clover, which is rarely found, and brings good luck to those who are able to lay hands on it.

"Have you found it, Fanchon?" said Landry, as soon as he reached her side.

"I have often found it," answered she, "but it does not bring good luck, as it is said to do, and three sprigs of it in my book have done me no good."

Landry sat down beside her as if he wanted to begin a conversation. But he suddenly became much more shy than he had ever been in the presence of Madelon, and though he had much to say, he could not find a word.

Little Fadette was shy, too; for if he did not speak, at least he looked at her with a strange expression. At last she asked him why he seemed to be so surprised as he looked at her.

"It may be," she said, "because I have changed my way of dress. In that I followed your advice; and I was convinced that if I wanted to appear like a sensible girl, I had better begin to dress sensibly. So I do not dare to show myself, for I am afraid of having still more fault found with me, and of making people say that I tried to make myself less ugly without success."

"They may say what they choose," said Landry, "but I cannot understand what you have done to make yourself so pretty; it is the truth that you are lovely to-day, and a man must be blind not to see it."

"Do not laugh at me, Landry," answered little Fadette. "They say beauty turns the head of pretty girls, and that ugliness makes ugly girls despair. I am used to being a scarecrow, and I don't want to be such a fool as to think I give pleasure. But you did not come to talk about this, and I am waiting for you to tell me whether Madelon has forgiven you."

"I have not come to speak of Madelon. If she has forgiven me, I know nothing of it, and ask no questions about it. I only know that you spoke to her of me, and so kindly that I owe you many thanks."

"How do you know that I spoke to her of you? Did she tell you? If she did, you must have made your peace."

"We have made no peace; she and I do not care enough about each other to be at war. I know that you spoke to her, because she told somebody who let me know."

Little Fadette blushed deeply, which gave her a new charm; for never till that day had she worn on her cheeks that honest glow of fear and pleasure which makes even the ugliest girls attractive; but, at the same time, she reflected anxiously that Madelon must have repeated her words, and turned her into ridicule on account of the love she had confessed for Landry.

"And what did Madelon say of me?" she demanded.

"She said that I was a great fool, and that no girl liked me, not even little Fadette; that little Fadette despised me, ran away from me, and hid the whole week so as not to see me, although the whole week through I went everywhere and looked everywhere to find little Fadette. So it is I who am the general laughing-stock, Fanchon ; because everybody knows that I love you, and that you do not love me ! "

" What foolish gossip ! " exclaimed Fadette, in astonishment ; for she was not enough of a witch to divine that at that moment Landry was slyer than she. " I did not think that Madelon was so false and treacherous. But you must forgive her, Landry ; for she speaks out of pique, and she is piqued because she loves you."

" Perhaps," said Landry ; " and that is why you are not piqued with me, Fanchon. You forgive me because you despise me."

" I have not deserved that from you, Landry ; indeed, I really have not deserved it ! I never was so foolish as to tell the lies ascribed to me. I spoke to Madelon of something quite different. What I said was for her ear alone, but it could not injure you. On the contrary, it should have proved to her how much I thought of you."

" Listen, Fanchon," said Landry ; " do not let us dispute over what you said or what you did not say. You are wise, and I want to consult you. Last Sunday, in the Chaumois road, I felt for you, without knowing why, a love so strong that this whole week I have neither eaten nor slept my fill. I shall not try to hide anything from you, for it would be labor lost with a girl as clever as you. I confess that on Monday morning I was very much ashamed of my love, and wanted to run away to avoid falling again into the same folly. But on Monday evening I had already fallen in again so deeply that I crossed the ford at night without fear of the sprite, though it tried to prevent my looking for you; for it was still there, and when it paid me its mocking greeting, I returned the compliment. Since Monday, every morning I feel like a fool, because they all tease me about my liking for you; and every evening I feel as if I were crazy, for I know that my liking for you is stronger than my false shame. And now, to-day, you are so pretty and well-behaved that everybody else will be amazed, too; and if you go on in this way, before two weeks are over, I shall not only be excused for being in love with you, but you will have many other lovers besides. Then there will be no merit in my loving you, and you will owe me no preference. However, if you remember last Sunday the feast of St. Andoche, you will also remember that in the Chaumois road I asked you to let me kiss you, and that I did it as ardently as if you had never been called ugly and disagreeable. These are my claims, Fadette. Tell me whether they count for anything, and whether you are angry or disposed to relent."

Little Fadette hid her face in her hands, and did not answer; Landry thought from what he had overheard of her conversation with Madelon, that she loved him; and I must acknowledge that her confession of love had immediately awakened his own. But when he saw the young girl's downcast and sorrowful attitude, he began to fear lest she had made up a story to Madelon, because she had so much at heart the success of the reconciliation she was negotiating. This vexed him, and he felt all the more in love with her. He drew away her hands from her face, and saw she was pale as death; and as he was upbraiding her sharply for making no response to his mad love for her, she fell back on the ground, her hands clasped, and gasping for breath; for she was suffocating, and dropped out of weakness.

CHAPTER XXIII

LANDRY was much frightened, and chafed her hands to bring her back to herself. Her hands were cold as icicles and stiff as pieces of wood, and he warmed and rubbed them long in his. When she recovered her speech, she said to him :

"I think you are laughing at me, Landry; but there are things about which it is wrong to jest. So I beg you to leave me alone, and never to speak to me unless you have a favor to ask of me. In that case, I shall always be at your service."

"Fadette! Fadette!" cried Landry—"what you say is unkind! It is you who have made fun of me. You hate me, and yet you made me believe something different."

"I?" said she, much grieved. "What have I ever made you believe? I offered you, and gave you, a true friendship, such as your twin's for you, and perhaps truer than his, for I have never been jealous; and instead of hindering you in your love-affair, I tried to serve you."

"It is true," said Landry; "you have been kind as an angel, and it is I who do wrong to reproach you. Forgive me, Fanchon, and let me love you as best I may. It may not be such a tranquil affection as that I feel for my twin or my sister Nanette, but I promise not to try to kiss you any more, if you object."

The tide of Landry's thoughts had turned, and he came to the conclusion that in reality little Fadette felt only a very calm affection for him; and because he was neither conceited nor vain, he became as shy and timid in her presence as if he had not heard with his own ears all she had said of him to pretty Madelon.

As to little Fadette, she had wit enough to understand at last that Landry was heart and soul madly in love with her, and it was on account of the too great pleasure it gave her that, for a moment, she had nearly fainted. But she was afraid of losing too quickly a happiness so quickly won, and fearing this, she was anxious to give Landry time enough to long for her affection.

He stayed with her till nightfall, for though he dared no longer tell her of his love, he was so attracted by her, and took so much pleasure in seeing her and listening to her, that he could not make up his mind to leave her for a moment. He played with the Grasshopper, who was never far from his sister, and soon joined them. He was good to him, and soon perceived that the poor little fellow, who had been so maltreated by everybody, was neither stupid nor malicious when he met with kindness; at the end of an hour, he was so subdued and grateful that he kissed the twin's hands and called him dear Landry, just as he called his sister dear Fanchon. Landry was touched, and pitied him, and thought that he, as well as everybody else, had been very guilty in the past toward Mother Fadet's two poor children, who needed a little love only to make them the best in the land.

The next few days Landry succeeded in seeing little Fadette, sometimes in the evening, when he was able to have a little conversation with her, and sometimes in the daytime, when he met her in the fields; and though she never stopped long, as she neither could nor would fail in her duty, he was happy to say a few earnest words to her, and to look at her with adoring eyes. She kept on being nice in her speech and well-behaved in her manners toward everybody ; so other people soon discovered the change, and altered their own tone and manners toward her. As she no longer did anything unfitting, no one insulted her ; and when she found she was no longer insulted, she felt no more temptation to provoke people or call them names.

But as public opinion does not change so quickly as our resolutions, it was destined that much time should elapse before the general scorn and aversion she inspired should give place to esteem and good-will. You will hear later how this came about; at present, you can easily imagine that nobody paid much attention to little Fadette's reformation. Four or five of those good old men and women who look indulgently on the young lives growing up around them, and are considered in return as the fathers and mothers of the neighborhood, sometimes talked under the walnut-trees of Cosse, and watched the swarm of young people and children dancing and throwing quoits. These old people said:

"That boy will make a fine soldier, if he continues as he is now, for he is too well made to be exempted from duty; this fellow will be as clever and knowing as his father; that other will be as wise and calm as his mother; young Lucette over there will certainly be a good farm-servant; big Louise will be sure to please; and as for little Marion, only let her grow up, and she will be as sensible as the others."

When they discussed little Fadette in her turn, and passed judgment upon her, they said:

"There she is, running away quickly, without stopping to dance or sing. No one has seen her since the feast of St. Andoche. She must have been greatly disgusted by the rudeness of the children who pulled off her cap in the dance; for she has changed her great coif, and now she is really no worse looking than other girls."

"Have you noticed how white her skin has grown lately?" said Mother Couturier. "Her face used to be so blotched with red that it looked like a quail's egg; but last time I saw her I was astonished to observe how white she had grown, and she was so pale that I even asked her if she had not had the fever. Looking at her now, we can imagine that she will improve; and who knows?—plenty of ugly girls have become pretty at sixteen or seventeen."

"And then they grow more sensible," said Father Naubin; "and they learn how to dress becomingly, and how to please. It is really time for the Cricket to find out that she is not a boy. Heavens! we all thought that she would turn out to be the disgrace of the town; but she will reform and settle down like other girls. She will feel it necessary to make amends for a sinful mother, and you will see that nobody will be able to say anything against her."

"May Heaven grant it," said Mother Courtillet; "for it is a bad thing for a girl to look like a loose horse; but I, too, have hopes of Fadette, for I met her the day before yesterday, and, instead of walking behind me, as usual, to imitate my lameness, she spoke to me, and asked after my health very politely."

"That little girl whom you are all speaking of is more foolish than she is malicious," said Father Henri. "Her heart is not bad, I can tell you, and the proof is that she has often kept my grandchildren in the fields with her, out of pure kindness, when my daughter was ill; and she took such good care of them that they did not want to leave her."

"I have heard," said Mother Couturier, "that one of Father Barbeau's twins was infatuated with her on the day of St. Andoche. Is it true?"

"Come," answered Father Naubin; "you must not take that seriously. It was only a childish fancy, and none of the Barbeaus are stupid, father, mother, or children. Can you not understand?"

Thus they talked of little Fadette; but, for the most part, nobody thought of her, for she was hardly ever seen.

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE was one person, however, who saw her often and thought a great deal of her, and that was Landry Barbeau. He was like a crazed creature when he could not speak with her at his leisure; but as soon as he had been a minute in her company, he grew calm and contented, because she soothed him and taught him to be reasonable. She played with him a little game which may have been slightly tinged with coquetry; at least he thought so; but as her motive was honorable, and she was unwilling to accept his love until he had perfectly considered the matter, he could not complain. She could not suspect him of trying to deceive her on the strength of his love, for it was a kind of love rarely found among people who live in the country, as they are less passionate in their affections than those who dwell in cities. Landry's character, too, was less passionate than that of many others, and nobody could have guessed that his wings would be so severely singed in the flame of the candle. He was careful to hide his secret, and anybody who had discovered it would have been amazed. But when little Fadette saw he was suddenly and entirely hers, she feared lest the blaze might be only of straw, or lest she herself might catch fire foolishly, and that their love-affair might go further than propriety allowed, in as much as they were still children — too young to be married, at least according to the dictates of prudence and of parents; for love is impatient, and when it is once kindled in the hearts of two young people, it would be a miracle if it should wait for the approbation of others.

Little Fadette had been outwardly a child longer than most girls, but she possessed good sense and a strength of will much in advance of her age. To allow this, her mind must have been of heroic force; for her heart was ardent, and perhaps even more ardent than Landry's. She loved him to madness, and yet she behaved with singular discretion; for though by day, by night, and at all hours she thought of him, and burned with impatience to see him, and with desire to caress him, as soon as she saw him, she became calm, spoke sensibly, pretended not to know what passionate love was, and permitted him no favor beyond a shake of the hand.

And though Landry was so bewitched by her that he might have lost his self-control when they were together in lonely places, or under cover of the darkness of night, he was yet in such fear of her displeasure, and was so uncertain that she really loved him, that he spent his time with her as innocently as if she had been his sister, and he Jeanet the little Grasshopper.

To distract his mind from ideas she was unwilling to encourage, she instructed him in the things she knew, in which her wit and cleverness had far outdone her grandmother's teaching. She made no mysteries with Landry, and as he had always been a little in awe of witchcraft, she took all possible pains to make him understand that the devil had nothing to do with the secret of her knowledge.

"You see, Landry," said she to him one day, "there is no such thing as the intervention of the evil spirit. There is but one Spirit, and it is good, for it is God's. Lucifer is the invention of the priest, and the hobgoblin is the invention of all the old crones of the country. When I was a child I believed in it all, and was afraid of my grandmother's evil spells; but she laughed at me, for it is a truth that if anybody is skeptical, it is that person who is trying to impose on others, and nobody believes less in Satan than the sorcerers who invoke him on all occasions. They know that they have never seen him, and that they have never had the least assistance from him. Those who are foolish enough to believe in him and to call upon him, have never been able to make him come. For instance, there is the miller of the *Passe-au-Chiens*, who, as my grandmother has told me, used to go off to the cross-roads with a big cudgel to call up the devil, and to give him, as he expected, a good thrashing. At night he was heard crying out: 'Are you coming, old wolf? Are you coming, mad dog? Are you coming, hobgoblin of a devil?' But the hobgoblin never came, and the miller nearly went mad with vanity; for he thought the devil was afraid of him."

"But," Landry would say, "it is not exactly Christian to disbelieve in the devil, my little Fanchon."

"I cannot argue about it," she answered; "but if he exists, I am very sure that he has no power to come upon earth to harm us, and to require our souls of us, to steal them from God. He could not be so insolent; and since the earth is the Lord's, the Lord alone can govern it and the men that live upon it."

So Landry recovered from his foolish terror, and it excited his admiration to see what a good Christian little Fadette was in all her thoughts and prayers. Even her piety was more attractive than that of other people. She loved God with all the fire of her heart, for her intelligence was always keen, and her heart always tender; and when she spoke to Landry of her love toward God, he was astonished that he had been taught to repeat prayers and to follow practices which he had never thought of understanding, and that though his attitude toward them had always been respectful, his heart had never been kindled with love for his Creator, like little Fadette's.

CHAPTER XXV

BY walking and talking with her, he learned the properties of herbs and recipes of all kinds for the cure of man and beast. He was soon able to try the effect of his remedies on one of Father Caillaud's cows, which had eaten too much green food, and was swollen up in consequence. After the veterinary had left her, saying that she had but an hour to live, Landry gave her a potion that little Fadette had taught him to compound. He did it without anybody's knowledge, and when the laborers, who were much vexed by the loss of such a fine cow, came in the morning to throw her body in a ditch, the swelling had almost entirely disappeared; her eye was bright, and they found her on her legs, beginning to sniff at her food. Another time a colt was bitten by a viper, and Landry, following faithfully little Fadette's teaching, succeeded in curing it speedily. Again, too, he tested a remedy for hydrophobia upon a dog at the Priche, and he cured it before it had bitten anybody. As Landry carefully concealed his acquaintance with little Fadette, he did not boast of his knowledge, and the cures he wrought on cattle were attributed solely to the great care he bestowed upon them. But Father Caillaud, who, like every good farmer, understood something of the matter, was surprised, and said:

"Father Barbeau has no skill in cattle-raising, and I may even call him unfortunate; for he lost several animals last year, and it was not the first time. But Landry has a happy knack, and that is something one is born with. A man either has it or does not have it; and even when people go to study in the schools, like the veterinary surgeons, they learn nothing unless they are born clever. Now, I tell you that Landry is clever, and that he can invent the right remedies. He has a natural gift, and it will be worth more to him than capital in the management of a farm."

Father Caillaud did not speak like a credulous or ignorant man, only he was mistaken in attributing a natural gift to Landry. Landry had no gift, save that of being painstaking and intelligent in the remedies which had been taught him. Still, a natural gift is no fable, since little Fadette possessed it; and since, by aid of the few simple lessons her grandmother had given her, she divined and discovered the virtues which God has placed in certain herbs and in certain methods of using them, as readily as if she were inventing them herself. For this she needed no witchcraft, and she was right to deny the imputation; but she had an observing mind, which enabled her to make comparisons and careful experiments; and no one can doubt that is a natural gift. Father Caillaud went still further, and affirmed that such and such a herdsman or laborer is more or less lucky, and that by the mere virtue of his presence in the stable he helps or harms the animals. However, as there is always a grain of truth in the most superstitious beliefs, it must be acknowledged that careful management, cleanliness, and conscientious toil have an especial power to bring success where carelessness and stupidity bring misfortune.

As Landry had always a taste and fancy for such things, his love for Fadette increased with the gratitude he owed her for her teaching, and with the great admiration he felt for the young girl's cleverness. He was thankful to her now that she had forbidden his making love to her in the walks and talks they had together; and he now recognized that she had more at heart the best interests and usefulness of her lover, than her own pleasure in allowing him to pay her his court and flatter her continually, as his first desire had prompted him to do.

Landry was soon so deep in love that he had quite overcome all feeling of shame incident to the possible discovery of his love for a girl who had the reputation of being ugly, ill-tempered, and badly brought up. If he still took precautions, it was because of his twin, whose jealousy he well knew, and who had already made a great effort to be reconciled to Landry's attachment to Madelon — an attachment which had been indeed very slight and unimpassioned compared to that he now felt for Fanchon Fadet.

But if Landry loved too warmly to think of prudence, little Fadette, on the contrary, was naturally inclined toward mystery ; and, moreover, she was unwilling that Landry should undergo the ordeal of his friends' raillery. Little Fadette, in short, loved him too much to be the cause of trouble in his family, and therefore exacted from him such entire secrecy that nearly a year elapsed before their affection was discovered. Landry had gradually taught Sylvinet not to keep such strict guard over his steps and actions; and the country, which is sparsely inhabited and thickly wooded, is very propitious to secret loves.

When Sylvinet saw that Landry thought no more of Madelon, though he had accepted the division of his brother's affection as a necessary evil, made more tolerable by Landry's bashfulness and the girl's discretion, he was rejoiced to find that Landry was in no haste to withdraw his heart to bestow it upon a woman; and as he no longer felt any jealousy, he left him more freedom in his walks and amusements on feast-days and holidays. Landry wanted no pretexts for going and coming, especially on Sunday evenings, when he left the Twinnery at an early hour, and never reached the Priche till midnight, and he found this very easy, for he had asked to have a little bed made for him in the *capharnion.* You may perhaps correct me for this word, because the schoolmaster objects to it, and wishes everybody to say *capharnaüm;* but if he knows the word, he does not know what it means, for I have been obliged to explain to him that it is a place in the barn, near the stables, where they keep yokes, chains, horseshoes, and tools of all kinds used for the farm animals and for the cultivation of the earth. Thus Landry could go home at any hour he chose without disturbing anybody; and he always had his Sundays to himself until Monday morning, because Father Caillaud and his eldest son, who were very judicious men and never went to the tavern or drank to excess on holidays, were accustomed on such days to assume the whole charge and management of the farm; so that all the young people in the house, who, as they said, worked harder than they did on week-days, should be free to frolic and amuse themselves according to God's decree.

In the winter, when the nights are so cold that it would be difficult to talk of love in the open fields, Landry and little Fadette found a safe refuge in Jacot's tower, an old deserted dove-cote which the pigeons had abandoned years ago, but which was well closed and protected. It belonged to Father Caillaud's farm, and he even still made use of it for storing the surplus of his crops; and since Landry kept the key, and the tower stands on the boundaries of the farm of the Priche, in the middle of a walled clover-field, nobody but the devil himself could have interrupted the interviews of our two young lovers. When the weather was mild, they roamed about the groves, which are young woods ready for felling, and are scattered all over the country. They afford excellent shelter for robbers and lovers; and as we have no robbers in our country, lovers take advantage of them, and find in them a safe and agreeable retreat.

CHAPTER XXVI

AS no secret can last always, it happened that one fine Sunday, as Sylvinet passed along the cemetery wall, he heard the voice of his twin, who was speaking at a distance of a few steps from him. Landry was speaking in a low tone; but Sylvinet was so familiar with his voice, that he would have guessed his meaning even if he had not heard his words.

"Why do you not want to dance?" Landry was saying to somebody whom Sylvinet could not see. "It is such a long time since you have been seen stopping after mass that no one will criticize my dancing with you, as my acquaintance with you has been almost forgotten. They will not think that I do it out of love, but out of politeness, and because I am curious to find out whether you can still dance well after so long an interval."

"No, Landry, no," answered a voice which Sylvinet did not recognize. It was long since he had heard it, as little Fadette had kept herself aloof from everybody, and particularly from him.

"No," said she; "it is much better for me not to attract attention; and if you danced with me once you would want to begin again every Sunday, and that would be more than enough to make people talk of us. Believe what I have always told you, Landry: the day when our love is discovered will be the beginning of our sorrows. Let me go home, and after you have passed a part of the day with your family and twin, you may come to meet me wherever we shall agree."

"It is so melancholy never to dance," said Landry; "you used to be so fond of dancing, my darling, and you danced so well! How much pleasure I should feel in taking your hand and holding you in my arms, and in knowing that you, who are so graceful and light of foot, dance with me alone!"

"That is just what I could not do," answered she. "But I see that you long to dance, dear Landry, and I do not see why you have given it up. Do go and dance a little; it will make me happy to think that you are enjoying yourself, and I shall wait for you more patiently."

"Oh, you have too much patience," answered Landry in a voice that showed he himself had none; "but I should rather cut off my legs than dance with girls I do not like, and whom I would not kiss for a hundred francs!"

"Very well, if I danced," said little Fadette, "I should have to dance with other young men besides you, and let them kiss me, too."

"Go home, then; go home as quickly as you can," said Landry: "I do not wish anybody to kiss you."

Sylvinet heard nothing further than the sound of retracing footsteps, and in order to escape being found eavesdropping by his brother, who was approaching, he slipped hastily into the cemetery, and let him pass by.

This discovery was a knife-thrust to Sylvinet's heart. He did not seek to discover the name of the girl whom Landry loved so passionately. It was enough for him to know that Landry had deserted him for somebody else, and that this other person was in possession of all the thoughts which were hidden from him, and that he was no longer in his brother's confidence.

"He must mistrust me," thought he, "and this girl he loves must try to induce him to fear and detest me. I am no longer surprised that he is always so bored at home, and so restless when I want to go to walk with him. I gave it up, thinking that he had a fancy for being alone; but now I shall take great care not to bother him. I shall not say anything to him, for he would be angry with me for finding out what he was not willing to intrust me with. I shall suffer alone, and he will be delighted to get rid of me."

Sylvinet did as he determined, and he even carried his resolution further than was necessary; for not only did he no longer try to keep his brother with him, but in order to avoid putting him under any restraint, he was always the first to leave the house, and went off to indulge in solitary reveries, never taking long walks in the country.

"For," thought he, "if I happened to meet Landry, he would think that I was spying him, and would make me feel that I was in his way."

So little by little his old sorrow, which had been almost healed, returned upon him so heavily and persistently that it was not slow to show itself in his face. His mother chided him gently; but as he was ashamed to acknowledge at eighteen the same weaknesses of mind he had known at fifteen, he was always unwilling to confess the trouble which was consuming him.

It was this that saved him from illness; for God abandons only those who abandon themselves, and whoever has the courage to shut up his sorrow within his own heart is stronger to fight against it than he who complains. The poor twin became habitually sad and pale, and had from time to time attacks of fever; and though he continued to grow somewhat taller, he remained slight and delicate in person. He was not very steady at his work, but it was not his fault, for he knew that work was good for him; it was enough for him to vex his father by his melancholy, and he did not wish to irritate and wrong him by his faint-heartedness. So he set to work, and toiled because he was angry with himself. He often attempted to do more than he could stand, and the next day he was so weary that he could make no further exertion.

"He will never be a strong workman," said Father Barbeau; "but he works as much as he can, and when he can, and does not spare himself. That is why I do not wish to hire him out to other masters; for his fear of a sharp reprimand and the little strength God has given him would soon be his death, and I should have to reproach myself all my life."

Mother Barbeau approved these reasons, and did all she could to cheer Sylvinet. She consulted several doctors in regard to his health, and some of them told her to take great care of him and give him nothing but milk to drink, because he was delicate; others said that he must be set to work, and must drink plenty of good wine, because being delicate he needed strengthening. Mother Barbeau did not know which one to believe, as is always the case when people go to many doctors.

Fortunately, owing to her indecision, she followed nobody's advice, and Sylvinet was allowed to walk along the path which God had opened for him, without meeting anything to make him turn to the right or the left; and he dragged his little burden without being too much oppressed by it, up to the moment when Landry's love-affair was made public, and Sylvinet found his own trouble increased by all that his brother had to suffer.

CHAPTER XXVII

MADELON was the first to detect the secret; and though she made the discovery unintentionally, she did not fail to turn it to bad account. She was consoled for losing Landry, and as she had not wasted much time in loving him, she had not needed much in which to forget him. Nevertheless, she nourished in her heart a slight grudge, which needed only an opportunity to show itself; for it is true that with women pique lasts longer than love.

It all happened thus: Pretty Madelon, who was renowned for her discreet behavior and haughty manners toward young men, was none the less a flirt at the bottom, and not half so true and faithful in her affections as the poor Cricket, of whom so much evil had been spoken and predicted. Madelon had already had two admirers, not counting Landry, and she was making up her mind to accept a third, who was her cousin, the youngest son of Father Caillaud of the Priche. She even liked him so well that when she found that the last youth whom she had encouraged kept close watch of her, and was in danger of making an explosion, she did not know where to find a safe refuge for her interviews with her new love, and so finally consented to chat with him in the very dove-cote where Landry and little Fadette had their blameless meetings.

The young Caillaud had searched everywhere for the key of the dove-cote, but he had not found it, because Landry kept it in his pocket, and he had not dared ask anybody for it, because he had no good reasons to give in explanation of his request. Nobody but Landry knew where it was, and young Caillaud, believing it to be lost, or that it was in his father's bunch of keys, felt no scruple about beating in the door. The day he did this he found Landry and Fadette in the tower, and the four lovers were so much abashed at seeing one another that they were all equally bound to keep the secret and to divulge nothing.

But Madelon felt a rush of rage and jealousy when she found that Landry, who was now one of the best-looking and most highly esteemed young men in the country, had kept such perfect faith with little Fadette, ever since the day of St. Andoche; and she resolved to take her revenge. To accomplish her object without confiding in young Caillaud, who was an honest man, and would have refused to lend his hand, she called to her assistance several young girls among her friends, who were also somewhat vexed by Landry's apparent slight in no longer asking them to dance, and they all set to watching little Fadette so strictly that before long they were quite sure of her love for Landry. As soon as they had espied the two, and seen them together a few times, they made a great noise through the country, saying to whomever would listen — and God knows whether slander ever needs ears to hear or tongue to tell — that Landry had contracted an undue intimacy with little Fadette.

Then all the feminine part of the young population took up the matter; for when a good-looking and well-to-do fellow pays attention to one girl, all the others consider it an insult to themselves; and if there is any fault to be found with her, they never miss the opportunity. It must be admitted, also, that when women undertake a piece of mischief, it goes fast and far.

Two weeks after the adventure in Jacot's tower, without any mention of the tower or of Madelon, who had been very careful not to put herself forward, and had even pretended to receive as news what she herself had secretly discovered, everybody, big and little, old and young, knew the loves of Landry the twin and Fanchon the Cricket.

The report reached the ears of Mother Barbeau, who was much troubled and did not like to tell her husband. Father Barbeau, however, learned it elsewhere, and Sylvinet, who had carefully kept his brother's secret, had the annoyance of finding out that everybody knew it.

One evening, when Landry was just about to leave the Twinnery at an early hour, as was his wont, his father said to him, in the presence of his mother, his eldest sister, and his twin :

"Do not be in such haste to leave us, Landry, for I have something to say to you ; I am waiting for your godfather, for I wish to ask an explanation of you before all those members of the family who are most interested in your welfare."

When the godfather, who was Uncle Landriche, had arrived, Father Barbeau began:

"What I have to say to you will cause you some mortification, Landry, and it is not without some mortification and much regret myself that I find myself obliged to cross-question you before the family. But I trust that this mortification may be of use to you, and cure you of a fancy which would certainly turn to your disadvantage.

"It seems that you have made an acquaintance which dates back to the last feast of St. Andoche, nearly a year ago. I heard of it at the time, for it was most extraordinary to see you dancing all day with a girl who is the ugliest, slovenliest, and of the worst repute in our country. I wished to pay no attention to it, for I thought that you had merely amused yourself, and I did not exactly approve such a diversion; for if it is wrong to associate with bad people, it is still worse to add to their humiliation and to the burden of universal dislike they have to bear. I neglected speaking to you about it, because, when I saw you look so depressed the next day, I was convinced that you were regretting what you had done, and would not fall into the same error a second time. But now, this last week, I have heard something entirely different; and though the report comes from trustworthy persons, I am unwilling to believe it, unless you are unable to deny it. If I have wronged you by my suspicions, you must attribute it to my interest in your welfare, and to my responsibility for your conduct; and if the whole story is a falsehood, you will make me very happy by giving me your word, and by assuring me that people are mistaken in their efforts to lower you in my esteem."

"Father," said Landry, "will you be so kind as to tell me what it is of which you accuse me, and I will answer you truthfully, and according to the respect I owe you."

"I think I have said enough to you to give you to understand, Landry, that you are accused of carrying on a dishonorable intercourse with the granddaughter of Mother Fadet, who is a very bad old woman, not to speak of the unfortunate girl's own mother, who disgracefully abandoned her husband, her children, and her country, to follow the camp. You are accused of wandering about everywhere with little Fadette, so that I am inclined to fear that she has entangled you in a wrongful love-affair, of which you may be obliged to repent all your life. Do you understand at last?"

"I understand, dear Father," answered Landry; "and allow me, please, to ask one question before I answer you. Is it because of her family, or only because of herself, that you consider Fanchon Fadet as an unfortunate acquaintance for me?"

"For both reasons, of course," said Father Barbeau, with rather more severity than he had shown at first; for he had expected to see Landry much abashed, and found him self-possessed and resolute. "First," he went on, "it is a disgrace for the girl to come of such bad stock; and no family as much esteemed and honored as mine would consent to ally itself with the Fadet family. In the next place, nobody respects or trusts little Fadette herself. We have watched her grow up, and we all know what she is good for. I have heard, and I admit that I myself have noticed several times this last year, that she is better behaved, that she no longer runs about with the little boys, and has stopped saying rude things to people. You see that I am anxious to be strictly just. But that is not enough to make me believe that a girl who has been so ill brought up can ever make a respectable wife; and knowing her grandmother as I do, I have every reason to believe that the whole thing is a preconcerted intrigue for the purpose of extracting promises from you, and bringing shame and confusion upon you. People even talk openly of consequences attendant upon the young girl's wrong-doing; and though I am unwilling to believe such a report lightly, I should be very much pained if it were true, because you would certainly be suspected and considered responsible, and you would end by finding yourself involved in scandal and a lawsuit."

Landry had made up his mind from the first to keep his temper and to answer quietly, but he now lost patience. He turned red as fire, and said, springing up from his chair:

"Father, the people who told you that lied like dogs! They have insulted Fanchon Fadet so outrageously that if I had them here they should be obliged to fight with me to the death. Tell them that they are cowards and heathens; let them come to say to my face what they have treacherously insinuated behind my back, and we shall have fair play!"

"Do not fly into such a passion, Landry," said Sylvinet, overcome with grief. "Our father does not accuse you of having wronged the girl; but he fears that she may have got into trouble with somebody else, and that by going about with you morning, noon, and night, she is trying to make people believe it is you who owe her reparation."

CHAPTER XXVIII

LANDRY was somewhat soothed by the voice of his twin, but he could not allow such words to pass without taking them up.

"Brother," he said, "you understand nothing of all this. You have always been prejudiced against little Fadette, and you do not know her at all. I care very little about what may be said of me, but I cannot allow a word to be spoken against her, and I wish to set my father and mother at rest by telling them myself that the earth does not hold another girl as honest, as wise, as good, and as disinterested as that girl is. If she is so unlucky as to be ill-connected, she deserves the more praise for being what she is; and I could never have believed that any Christian soul would blame her for the misfortune of her birth."

"It seems that you are blaming me, Landry," said Father Barbeau, rising too, to show that he would not allow any more words on the subject. "I see by your ill humor that you care more for Fadette than I could have wished. Since you are neither sorry nor ashamed, let us say no more about it. I shall reflect on what I must do to cure you of this piece of youthful folly. It is time now for you to go home to your master."

"You must not go off like that," cried Sylvinet, holding back his brother, who had turned to go. "Father, Landry is so grieved to have displeased you that he can find nothing to say. Forgive him, and kiss him, or he will cry all night long, and your anger will be too great a punishment for him."

Sylvinet was crying, Mother Barbeau was crying, and the eldest sister and Uncle Landriche too. Nobody had dry eyes except Father Barbeau and Landry, and their hearts were bursting. Still, they kissed each other at the request of the others; and Father Barbeau exacted no promise from his son, as he knew that where love is at stake such promises are apt to be hazardous, and he was unwilling to compromise his authority. He gave Landry to understand, however, that he would not allow the matter to drop, but would return to the charge. Landry went away wrathful and despairing. Sylvinet wanted to follow him, but he dared not, as he was certain that his brother would go to confide his troubles to little Fadette; and so he went to bed in such a melancholy humor that he sighed all night, and dreamed of misfortune in the family.

Landry went directly to little Fadette's house, and tapped at the door. Mother Fadet had now grown so deaf that when she had once fallen asleep nothing roused her; and ever since Landry had known that his secret was discovered, he could only talk with Fanchon in the evening, in the room where both the old woman and little Jeanet were sleeping. Even this was a great risk, for the old witch could not endure him, and would have been more apt to put him out of doors with a broomstick than to receive him with politeness. Landry told his trouble to Fadette, and found her perfectly brave and resigned. At first she tried to persuade him that it would be for his best interest to take back his heart into his own keeping, and to think no more of her. But when she saw that he grew more and more distressed and rebellious, she induced him to submit by allowing him to hope in the future.

"Listen, Landry," said she to him; "I have always foreseen what has just happened, and I have often considered what we should do in the present case. Your father is not in the wrong, and I am not angry with him; for it is his love for you that makes him fear your being in love with a girl as undeserving as I. I am ready to forgive him for his pride, and for the slight injustice he does me; for we must agree that I was a madcap in my childhood, and you yourself found fault with me the first day you began to care for me. Even if I have cured myself of some of my failings in the course of this last year, it is not a long enough time to inspire your father with confidence, as he himself said to you to-day. Still more time must pass, and little by little the prejudices against me will subside and the villainous lies they tell of me will die away of themselves. Your father and mother will see that I am an honest girl, and that I am not trying to corrupt you or to cheat you out of money. They will recognize my love for you as honorable, and we shall be able to see each other and speak together openly. In the mean time, you must obey your father, who is certain to forbid your associating with me."

"I can never have so much courage," said Landry; "I should rather throw myself into the river."

"Very well, if you cannot, I shall have it for you," said little Fadette; "I shall go away, and shall leave the country for a little while. There is a good situation in town which has been open to me for two months past. My grandmother is now so deaf and old that she hardly pays any more attention to compounding and selling her medicines, and she is unable to give any more consultations. She has a relation, a very good woman, who offers to come and live with her, and will take excellent care of her and of my poor Grasshopper."

Here little Fadette's voice choked for a moment at the idea of leaving the child, whom, next to Landry, she loved best in the world; but she took courage and said:

"Now he is strong enough to do without me. He is going to make his first communion, and he will be so interested in going to catechism with the other children that he will forget his grief at losing me. You must have observed how good he has grown to be, and that he no longer flies into passion with the other children. In short, this must be,—Landry, do not you see? I must give people time to forget me, for just now I am the object of much anger and jealousy in this place. After a year or two spent at a distance, when I come home with good recommendations and a fair name, which I can acquire elsewhere more easily than here, nobody will torment us any more, and we shall be better friends than ever."

Landry would not listen to this plan; he gave way to despair, and went home to the Priche in a state of mind which would have extorted pity from his worst enemy.

Two days afterward, as he was busy with the tubs for the vintage, Cadet Caillaud said to him:

"I am sure that you are angry with me, Landry; for you have not spoken to me for some time. You probably believe that it is I who spread the report of your love-affair with little Fadette, and I am sorry that you can think me capable of such meanness. As true as God is in heaven, I never breathed a word, and I am grieved that you should have so much to suffer; for I have always thought the world of you, and I never did any harm to little Fadette. I am even willing to acknowledge that I respect the girl ever since our meeting in the dove-cote; for she has had ample opportunity to gossip, and yet she has been so discreet that nobody has heard a word from her lips. She might have made use of what she knew, however, if it were only to take her revenge on Madelon, whom she well knows to be the author of all the scandal, but she has not done so; and I see, Landry, that we must not trust to appearance or reputation. Little Fadette passed for a bad girl, but she has turned out to be most kind; Madelon, who passed for a good girl, has proved false, not only to Fadette and to you, but also to me, and at present I see great reason to complain of her want of faith."

Landry readily accepted the explanations of Cadet Caillaud, who did his best to console his friend in his distress.

"People have been very unkind to you, poor Landry," said he, as he ended; "but you must take comfort in little Fadette's good conduct. She does right to go away, to put an end to the disturbance in your family, and I have just told her so, as I said good-by to her on the road."

"What do you mean, Cadet?" exclaimed Landry; "is she going away? Has she gone?"

"Did you not know it?" said Cadet. "I supposed that it was agreed between you, and that you did not go with her to avoid criticism. But she is certainly going; she passed right by our house not more than a quarter of an hour ago, and she was carrying her little bundle under her arm. She was going to Château-Meillant, and by this time she cannot be farther off than Vieille-Ville, or the hill of Urmont."

Landry left his goad leaning up against the yoke of his oxen, started off, and never stopped till he caught up with little Fadette in the sandy road which goes down from the vineyard of Urmont to Fremelaine.

There, exhausted by grief, and by his long run, he sank down across the path without the power of speech, making signs to the girl that if she meant to leave him, she must tread upon his prostrate body.

After he had somewhat recovered, little Fadette said to him:

"I wished to spare you this trouble, dear Landry, and now you are doing all you can to take away my strength. Be a man, and do not try to rob me of my courage; I need more than you imagine, and when I think that poor little Jeanet is crying and looking for me at this very moment, I feel so weak that I am ready to dash my head against these stones. Ah! Landry, I beg of you to help me instead of turning me aside from my duty; for if I do not go away to-day, I shall never go, and we shall be lost."

"Fanchon! Fanchon! you do not need any such great courage," answered Landry. "You are only regretting a child who will soon forget you because he is a child. You do not care for my despair; you do not know what love is; you feel none for me, and you will soon forget me, so that perhaps you will never come back."

"I shall come back, Landry; I take God to witness that I shall come back in a year at the soonest, and in two years at the latest, and that I shall remember you so well that I shall never have another friend or another lover."

"It may be that you will never have another such friend, Fanchon, because you will never find one as obedient as I; but I cannot tell about another lover; who can answer for it?"

"I can answer for it."

"You know nothing about it yourself, Fadette; you have never known what love is, and when it comes to you, you will never remember your poor

Landry. Ah! if you had loved me as I love you, you would never leave me like this."

"Do you think so, Landry?" said little Fadette, looking at him sadly and seriously. "Perhaps you do not know what you are saying. I myself believe that I should be more easily governed by love than friendship."

"If you were really governed by love, I should not suffer so much. O Fanchon! if it were only love, I believe that I should be almost happy in the midst of misery. I should trust in your word, and should hope in the future; I should have courage like yours,—I should, indeed! But it is not love; you have often told me so, and I have observed it in your quiet ways with me."

"So you think it is not love," said little Fadette; "you are quite sure of it?"

As she still looked at him, the tears filled her eyes and rolled down over her cheeks, and she smiled a very strange smile.

"O my God! my God!" cried Landry, taking her into his arms, "if I should be mistaken!"

"I know that you are mistaken, indeed," answered little Fadette, smiling and crying at the same time. "I know that since she was thirteen years old, the poor Cricket has singled out Landry, and has never thought of anybody else. I know that when she followed him through the fields and along the roads, pursuing him with nonsense and raillery in order to oblige him to pay attention to her, she did not know what she was doing, or what it was that attracted her toward him. I know that when she set out one day in search of Sylvinet, because of Landry's anxiety, and found him on the river's brink absorbed in thought, and holding a little lamb on his knees, she tried a little witchcraft on Landry so that Landry should be forced into owing her gratitude. I know that when she insulted him at the ford of the Roulettes, it was because she felt vexed and grieved that he had never spoken to her since. I know that when she wanted to dance with him, it was because she was wild about him, and hoped to please him by her graceful dancing. I know that when she wept in the Chaumois road, it was out of repentance and sorrow for having caused him pain. I know very well, too, that when he wanted to kiss her and she forbade him, when he spoke to her of love and she answered him coolly, it was because she feared to lose his love by granting his desire too quickly. In short, I know that if she breaks her heart by going away, it is because she hopes to come back worthy of him in everybody's opinion, and to become his wife without bringing his family to humiliation and distress."

This time Landry thought that he would lose his senses altogether. He laughed, he shouted, and he cried; he kissed Fadette's hands and dress, and he would have kissed her feet had she allowed him; but she raised him up and gave him a true-love kiss which nearly brought him to his death, for it was the first he had received from her or from any other girl; and then, as he sank half fainting on the side of the road, she picked up her bundle in blushing confusion and ran off, forbidding him to follow her, and swearing that she would come back again.

CHAPTER XXIX

LANDRY submitted, and returned to the vintage, surprised not to be as unhappy as he had expected; for it is sweet to know that one is loved, and faith is great where love is great. He was so much amazed and so happy that he could not help speaking of it to Cadet Caillaud, who wondered, too, and admired little Fadette for her wisdom in avoiding any weakness or imprudence all the time she had loved Landry and had been loved by him.

"I am glad to see," said he, "that this girl has so many good qualities; for I myself have never thought ill of her, and I am even willing to acknowledge that if she had turned her attention toward me, I should have liked her. She has always seemed to me pretty, rather than ugly, on account of her eyes; and, for some time past, whenever she tried to please, it was easy to see that she became more attractive every day. But she loved nobody but you, Landry, and was content not to be displeasing to others; she sought no approval but yours, and I assure you that is the kind of woman I admire. Besides, I have known her from a child, and I have always believed her to have a good heart; and if everybody were asked to say truly and conscientiously what they thought of her, they would be obliged to testify in her favor; but it is the way of the world, that if two or three people attack some one, all the rest join in the pursuit, throw stones, and add to the slander without knowing why, just as if it were for the pleasure of crushing a defenseless person."

Landry was much relieved to hear Cadet Caillaud talk thus, and from that day on he became very intimate with him, and found some consolation in confiding his sorrows in him. He even said to him, one day:

"Think no more of Madelon, dear Cadet; she has given us both a great deal of trouble. You are no older than I, and you need be in no hurry to marry. I have a little sister, Nanette, a sweet girl, as pretty as a picture, and well brought up, and she will soon be sixteen. Come and see us a little oftener, and when you know our Nanette better, you will think it a good idea to become my brother-in-law."

"Upon my word, I am not going to refuse," answered Cadet; "and if the girl is not betrothed to anybody else, I shall call at your house every Sunday."

The evening after Fanchon Fadet's departure, Landry went to see his father, to tell him of the honest conduct of the girl whom Father Barbeau had so misjudged; and he offered him at the same time his submission for the present, while making every reservation for the future. His heart swelled as he passed by Mother Fadet's house; but he called all his courage to his aid, remembering that if Fanchon had not gone away, he might perhaps have waited long for his present happiness in knowing that she loved him. He saw, too, Mother Fanchette, Fadette's cousin and godmother, who had come to take care of the old woman and the little boy in her place. She was seated in front of the door, with the Grasshopper on her knees. Poor Jeanet was crying, and refused to go to bed, because he said that Fanchon had not as yet come back, and it was she who always heard him say his prayers and put him to bed. Mother Fanchette did her best to soothe him, and Landry was happy to hear her speak to the child so sweetly and kindly. As soon as the Grasshopper caught sight of Landry, he escaped from Mother Fanchette's hands, though she held him tight, and rushed to throw himself in the twin's way with many kisses and questions, and entreaties to him to bring back his Fanchon. Landry took him in his arms, and, shedding tears himself, did his best to console him. He wanted to give him a fine bunch of grapes which he was carrying in a little basket from Mother Caillaud to Mother Barbeau; but Jeanet, who was ordinarily somewhat greedy, was unwilling to accept anything unless Landry promised to go to look up his Fanchon. So Landry sighed and gave his promise, for the child would never have submitted otherwise to Mother Fanchette's authority.

Father Barbeau had not expected such great resolution from little Fadette. He was pleased; but he felt a pang of regret for what he had done, as he was a just and kind-hearted man.

"I am sorry, Landry," said he, "that you did not have the courage to give up going to see her. If you had done your duty you would not have been the cause of her going away. Heaven grant that the child may thrive in her new home, and that her grandmother and little brother may not suffer from her absence; for though many people speak ill of her, others again take her part, and have assured me that she was good and useful in her family. If the evil tales I have heard of her are false, we shall soon know for certain, and shall clear her as behooves us. If, unhappily, they should turn out to be true, and you, Landry, are the guilty one, we shall nevertheless come to her assistance, and shall not let her fall into poverty. All that I exact of you, Landry, is that you shall never marry her."

"Father," said Landry, "you and I see this thing in a different light. If I were guilty of what you think, I should, on the contrary, ask you to give me your permission to marry her. But as little Fadette is as innocent as my sister Nanette, I only ask of you now to forgive the annoyance I have caused you. We shall speak of her later, as you have promised me."

Father Barbeau was obliged to accept these conditions, and to renounce any further insistance. He was too prudent to attempt to hurry matters, and had to be satisfied with what he had obtained.

From that time Fadette was no more spoken of at the Twinnery. They even avoided all mention of her name, for Landry turned red and then pale whenever it escaped from anybody in his presence, and it was easy to see that he remembered her as at first.

CHAPTER XXX

AT first Sylvinet felt a selfish pleasure in learning that Fadette had gone away, and he flattered himself that in the future his twin would be devoted to him alone, and would leave him for nobody else. But it was not so. It is true that Landry loved Sylvinet better than anybody in the world after little Fadette ; but he could not long be happy in his society, because Sylvinet was unwilling to give up his aversion to Fanchon. As soon as Landry tried to speak to him of her, and to make him share in her interests, Sylvinet became distressed, and reproached him for persisting in an attachment so disagreeable to their parents and so vexatious to himself. After that, Landry spoke no more to him of her ; but as he could not live without speaking of her, he divided his time between Cadet Caillaud and little Jeanet. He took the child out walking with him, heard him repeat his catechism, and taught and cheered him as best he could; and when they were seen together, people would have jeered at him if they had dared. Landry never allowed himself to be ridiculed on any subject, or he would have been proud rather than ashamed to show his affection for Fanchon Fadet's brother; and it was in this way that he protested against the sayings of those who declared that his father's wise influence had soon put an end to his love-affair.

Sylvinet found that his brother did not return to him as much as he had expected, and was constrained to direct his jealousy toward little Jeanet and Cadet Caillaud; he saw, too, on the other hand, that his little sister Nanette, who until then had cheered and gladdened him by her tender services and caressing attentions, began to take pleasure in the society of the same Cadet Caillaud, whose attachment was openly approved by both families. In short, poor Sylvinet, whose passion it was to possess the undivided affection of those whom he loved, fell into a singular melancholy and mortal languor, and his mind became so darkened that no one knew what to do to please him. He never laughed any more; he found enjoyment in nothing, and could scarcely work, for he grew continually weaker, and pined away. At last they feared for his life, as he was scarcely ever without fever; and whenever he suffered a little more than usual from it, he spoke unreasonably, and cruelly wounded the hearts of his parents. He declared that nobody loved him,— he who had been more petted and spoiled than anybody in the family. He wished for death, saying that he was good for nothing; that his friends were kind to him out of pity for his sad condition, but that he was a burden to his parents, and it would be a mercy if God should rid them of him.

Sometimes Father Barbeau blamed the boy severely when he heard these unchristian words, but nothing good came of it. At other times Father Barbeau entreated him with tears to believe in his affection. This was still worse: Sylvinet wept, repented, and asked forgiveness of his father, his mother, his twin, and all his family; and the fever always came back more fiercely after he had given free vent to the morbid sensibility of his sick heart.

They consulted new doctors, who did not give much advice, but who thought, as could be easily gathered from their expression, that the whole evil arose from the boys being twins, and that one or the other, and consequently the weaker one, must die.

They also consulted the nurse of Clavières, the most learned woman in the country after Mother Sagette, who was dead, and Mother Fadet, who was beginning to fall into her dotage. This skilful woman said in answer to Mother Barbeau:

"There is but one thing which can save your son, and that is that he should care for women."

"And he cannot endure the sight of them," said Mother Barbeau; "there never was another boy so retiring and so disdainful; and since his twin fell in love, he has done nothing but speak ill of all the girls of our acquaintance. He abuses them all, because one of them, and unfortunately not the best, has, as he says, stolen from him the heart of his twin."

"Well," said the nurse, who had great insight into all maladies of mind and body, "the day your son Sylvinet loves a woman, he will love her still more madly than he loves his brother. I tell you this beforehand. He has an excess of love in his heart, and because he has always directed it toward his twin, he has almost forgotten his sex; and thus he has sinned against that law of God which decrees that a man shall cherish a woman above father or mother, sister or brother. But take comfort; it is not possible that nature should not dictate to him in this, however behindhand he may be; and take care that you do not hesitate to give him in marriage the woman he loves, whether she be poor, or ugly, or disagreeable; for it is evident that he will never love more than one in his life. His heart is too tenacious for that; and if a miracle is required to separate him from his twin, a still greater one would be necessary to separate him from the woman whom he preferred to him."

The nurse's advice commended itself to Father Barbeau, and he attempted to send Sylvinet to visit at those houses where there were good and pretty young girls. But although Sylvinet was both good-looking and well-mannered, his melancholy and indifferent air was displeasing to the girls. They made no advances toward him, and he was so timid that he stood in awe of them, and therefore imagined that he detested them.

Father Caillaud, who was a great friend and one of the best advisers of the family, then gave other counsel.

"I have always told you," said he, "that absence was the best remedy. Look at Landry! He was crazy about little Fadette, and yet now that she has gone away, he has lost neither his mind nor his health, and even seems happier than he was; for we used to notice that he was melancholy occasionally, though we could not find out the cause. Now he is entirely sensible and resigned. It would be the same with Sylvinet, if he should not see his brother for five or six months. I am going to tell you how to separate them quietly. My farm of the Priche is doing well; but, on the other hand, some property I have which lies over toward Arton, is in a very bad condition, because my farmer has been ill for nearly a year and does not recover. I am unwilling to turn him out, because he is a truly honest man. If I should send a good workman to his assistance, he would get better; for his illness is the result of over-fatigue and too much zeal. If you consent, I shall send Landry to spend the rest of the season there. We shall let him go without allowing Sylvinet to find out that it is for long, but shall say, on the contrary, that he will be gone only a week. After a week has passed, we shall mention another week, and so on, until Sylvinet becomes accustomed to his brother's absence. Follow my advice instead of constantly gratifying the whims of a boy whom you have petted too much and allowed to take the upper hand at home."

Father Barbeau was inclined to follow this counsel, but it terrified Mother Barbeau, and she feared that it would prove to be a death-blow to Sylvinet. It was necessary to make a compromise, and she asked leave to keep Landry two weeks at home in order to see if his constant presence there would cure his brother. If, on the other hand, Sylvinet should grow worse, she promised to surrender to Father Caillaud's opinion.

Thus it was done. Landry gladly agreed to spend the required time at the Twinnery, and he came home under the pretext that his father needed his assistance in threshing the rest of the corn, as Sylvinet was no longer able to work. Landry was most tenderly solicitous to please his brother. He stayed with him continually, slept with him in the same bed, and cared for him as if he were a little child. On the first day, Sylvinet was very happy; but on the second, he insisted that Landry was bored with him, and Landry was unable to remove the idea from his mind. On the third day, Sylvinet was furious because the Grasshopper came to see Landry, and Landry had not the heart to send him away. At last, at the end of a week, it was necessary to make a change; for Sylvinet became more and more unjust and exacting, and was jealous of his own shadow. Then they thought of putting Father Caillaud's plan into execution; and though Landry dearly loved his village, his work, his family, and his masters, and was not at all anxious to go to live among strangers at Arton, he was willing to submit to all that was advised in the interest of his brother.

CHAPTER XXXI

THIS time Sylvinet nearly died the first day; but the next day he was calmer, and on the third the fever left him. He became first resigned, and then resolute; and at the end of a week, his friends recognized that his brother's absence did more for him than his presence. In his jealous meditations he discovered a motive for being almost pleased with Landry's departure. "At least," said he, "he knows nobody in the place where he is going, and he will not make new acquaintances immediately. He will find it dull, and will think of me and wish for me. When he comes back, he will be fonder of me."

Landry had been absent about three months, and it was about a year since little Fadette had left the country, when she came back suddenly, because her grandmother had been struck with paralysis. She nursed her grandmother with great zeal and affection; but old age is the worst of all diseases, and at the end of a fortnight, Mother Fadet involuntarily gave up the ghost. Three days afterward, little Fadette accompanied the body of the poor old woman to the cemetery; and then, after she had set the house in order, had undressed her brother and put him to bed, and had kissed her kind godmother, who had withdrawn to sleep in the other room, she sat down very sadly in front of the small fire that gave but little light, and listened to the song of the cricket on the hearth, which seemed to say to her:

Cricket, Cricket, it grows late,
And every fairy has her mate.

The rain and sleet were falling and beating against the windows, and Fanchon was thinking of her lover, when somebody knocked at the door, and a voice said:

"Fanchon Fadet, are you there, and do you know who I am?"

She was not slow to open, and great was her joy in being clasped to Landry's heart. Landry had heard of the grandmother's illness and of Fanchon's return. He had been unable to resist his desire to see her, and he came at nightfall, to leave at dawn. They spent the whole night talking at the fireside, but very quietly and seriously; for little Fadette reminded Landry that the bed on which her grandmother had died was scarcely cold, and it was neither the time nor the place to forget themselves in their own joy. Still, in spite of their good resolutions, they were very happy to be together, and to find that they loved each other more than ever before.

As day broke, however, Landry began to lose courage, and implored Fanchon to hide him in her attic so that he could see her again the next night. But, as usual, she brought him to his senses, and made him reflect that they were not to be long separated; for she had decided to remain at home.

"I have reasons for it," said she, "which you shall know later, and which shall not stand in the way of our hope of marrying. Go back and finish the work with which your master has intrusted you, since, as I have heard from my godmother, it is necessary for your brother's recovery that he should not see you for some time to come."

"That is the only reason which can induce me to leave you," answered Landry; "for my poor twin has caused me a great deal of pain, and I fear that I have still more to suffer on his account. You know so much, Fanchonette, you might find some means of curing him."

"I know of none but of making him listen to reason," answered she; "for it is his mind which affects his body, and whoever could cure one would cure the other. But his aversion to me is so great that I shall never have an opportunity of speaking to him and helping him."

"But you are so clever, Fadette; you are so eloquent, and have such a gift of persuasion whenever you choose to take the trouble, that if you talked with him for an hour only, he would feel the effect of it. Try, I entreat you. Do not be discouraged because of his pride and ill-humor. Oblige him to listen to you. Make this little effort for my sake, Fanchon, and for the sake of the success of our love; for my brother's opposition is not the smallest of the obstacles which lie in our way."

Fanchon promised; and they parted after repeating more than a hundred times that they loved and should always love each other.

CHAPTER XXXII

NOBODY in the country knew that Landry had come back. If Sylvinet had learned it by any chance, he would certainly have had another attack of illness, for he could never have forgiven his brother for having come to see Fadette and not himself.

Two days afterward, little Fadette dressed herself very neatly; for she was no longer without a penny, and her mourning was of nice fine serge. She walked through the village of Cosse, and as she had grown a great deal taller, those who saw her pass did not recognize her at first. She had become much prettier in town; as she had been better lodged and fed, her complexion had improved, and she had gained the plumpness which belonged to her age; and now she could no longer be taken for a boy in disguise, for her figure was graceful and pleasant to look upon. Love and happiness had lent to her face and person that mysterious charm which is so marked and yet so inexplicable. In short, though she was not the prettiest girl in the world, as Landry imagined, she was the comeliest, the best made, the freshest, and perhaps the most desirable in the neighborhood.

She carried a basket on her arm, and stopped at the Twinnery, where she asked to speak with Father Barbeau. Sylvinet was the first to see her, and he turned away from her, so great was his displeasure at meeting her. But she asked him where his father was with so much civility that he was forced to answer her, and to show her the way to the barn, where Father Barbeau was busy with his carpentry. Little Fadette begged Father Barbeau to take her to a place where she could speak with him in private, and then he shut the door of the barn, and said she could tell him everything she wished.

Little Fadette did not allow herself to be disheartened by Father Barbeau's chilling manner. She sat down on one bundle of straw, and he on another, and then she began:

"Though my grandmother, who is now dead, had a grudge against you, and you have a grudge against me, it is no less true that I know you for the most just and trustworthy man in the country. There is but one voice on the subject, and my grandmother herself, though she blamed your pride, did justice to you in this respect. Moreover, as you know, I have had a long acquaintance with your son Landry. He has often spoken to me of you, and I know your character and worth through him better than through others. That is why I have come to ask a favor of you, and to intrust you with my confidence."

"Speak, Fadette," answered Father Barbeau. "I have never refused my assistance to anybody, and you may rely upon me, unless you have something to ask which my conscience forbids."

"This is what I have come for," said little Fadette, raising her basket and placing it at Father Barbeau's feet. "My grandmother earned during her lifetime, by giving consultations and selling remedies, more money than anybody was aware of; as she spent hardly anything, and invested nothing, no one could know how much she had in an old hole in her cellar. She often showed me the spot, and said: 'When I am dead, you will find there all the money I shall leave; it will all belong to you and your brother, and if I make you suffer a few privations now, it is that you may one day be the richer. But do not let the lawyers get hold of it, for they will eat it all up in costs. Keep it when it comes into your possession, and hide it all your life, so that you may use it when you are old, and may never fall into want.'

"After my poor grandmother was buried, I obeyed her injunctions; I took the key of the cellar and tore down the bricks of the wall in the place she had shown me. I found there what I bring you in this basket, Father Barbeau, and beg you to invest it for me as you shall think best, after fulfilling the requirements of the law, of which I am so ignorant, and preserving me from the great expenses which I dread."

"I am much obliged to you for your confidence, Fadette," said Father Barbeau, without opening the basket, although he felt rather curious; "but I have no right to receive your money and to assume the charge of your affairs. I am not your guardian. Surely your grandmother made a will?"

"She made no will, and the guardian appointed me by law is my mother. Now, you know that for a long time I have had no news of her, and that I do not know whether she is alive or dead, poor soul! After her, I have no other relation except my godmother Fanchette, who is a good, honest woman, but quite incapable of managing my property, or even keeping it safely locked up. She could not help talking of it and showing it to everybody, and I should be afraid either of her investing it foolishly, or of her allowing it to be handled by so many officious persons that it might diminish without her knowledge; for my poor dear godmother has not the slightest idea how to keep accounts."

"Is it then considerable?" asked Father Barbeau, whose eyes were fixed, in spite of himself, on the cover of the basket; and he lifted it by the handle to ascertain its weight. He found it so heavy that he was surprised.

"If it is copper coin," said he, "a small sum would be enough to load a horse."

Little Fadette, who had a fine sense of humor, was much amused by his desire to examine the basket. She made a motion to open it, but Father Barbeau thought it beneath his dignity to let her do it.

"It is no concern of mine," said he; "and since I cannot take your money into my safekeeping, I ought not to know your affairs."

"But you must at least do me this little service, Father Barbeau," said Fadette. "I am not much wiser than my godmother about counting above a hundred. Then, too, I do not know the value of all old and new coins, and I can only trust you to tell me whether I am poor or rich, and to find out exactly the amount of my possessions."

"Let us see," said Father Barbeau, who could hold out no longer; "you are not asking a very great favor of me, and I must not refuse it."

Then little Fadette raised quickly the two covers of the basket, and drew out two large bags, each of which contained crowns to the amount of two thousand francs.

"Well! that is very nice," said Father Barbeau; "there is a little dowry which will bring you more than one suitor."

"That is not all," said little Fadette; "there is still a little sum at the bottom of the basket, though I do not know how much it is."

She drew out a purse of eelskin, and emptied it into Father Barbeau's hat. There were in it a hundred gold coins of an ancient stamp, which made the good man open his eyes; after he had counted these and replaced them in the purse, she took out a second, the contents of which were the same; and then a third, and then a fourth; and finally it was seen that the basket held in gold and silver and small coin not much less than forty thousand francs.

That was about one third more than the value of all the buildings Father Barbeau owned, and, as country people never realize ready money, he had never seen so much gold at once in his life before.

Honest and disinterested as a peasant may be, it cannot be said that the sight of money is painful to him; and, for the moment, drops of perspiration started to Father Barbeau's forehead. After he had counted everything, he said:

"You are only twenty-two crowns short of forty thousand francs, and I may say that your share of the inheritance is two thousand pistoles in ready money; so you are the best match in the country, little Fadette, and your brother the Grasshopper can be sickly and lame all his life: he can go in a carriage to look after his property. You may be content, for you have only to say that you are rich, and let it be generally known, if you want to find a handsome husband."

"I am in no hurry," said little Fadette; "and I ask you, on the contrary, to keep the secret of my wealth, Father Barbeau. As I am so ugly, it is my fancy to be married, not for my money, but for my good heart and my fair name; and as my reputation in this part of the country is bad, I should like to pass some time here to let people see that I do not deserve it."

"As to your ugliness, Fadette," said Father Barbeau, lifting his eyes, which had been till then glued to the top of the basket, "I can tell you in good earnest that you have got rid of it in the most astonishing way, and that you are so much improved since your stay in town that you may now pass for a pretty girl. And as to your bad name, if, as I like to think, you do not deserve it, I approve your idea of delaying a little and of keeping the secret of your riches; for there are plenty of men who would be so dazzled by them as to desire to marry you, without previously feeling for you that esteem which a woman should require from her husband.

"Now, as to your leaving this money in my custody, it would be contrary to law, and might expose me later to suspicions and false charges; for there are always plenty of evil tongues abroad. And besides, even supposing that you have the right to dispose of what belongs to you, you have none to invest lightly the property of your brother, who is a minor. All that I can do will be to ask advice for you, without mentioning your name; and then I shall let you know the best means of investing your mother's inheritance and yours safely and correctly, without allowing it to pass through the hands of pettifoggers, which are not always to be trusted. Carry all this money home, and hide it until I give you your answer. I shall be at your service when you require it, to testify before the agents of your joint heir to the amount of the sum which we have just counted, and the figure of which I am going to write down in the corner of my barn, so that I may not forget it."

All little Fadette wanted was that Father Barbeau should know the whole truth of the matter. If she felt a little proud to have him find out that she was rich, it was so that he should no longer be able to accuse her of imposing upon Landry.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN Father Barbeau saw how prudent and clever she was, he was less in haste to deposit and invest her money for her than to find out concerning the reputation she had acquired at Château-Meillant, where she had spent the year. For if her large dowry tempted him to pass over her unfortunate parentage, it could never induce him to be careless about the honor of the girl whom he thought of accepting as his daughter-in-law. So he went himself to Château-Meillant, and was most conscientious in seeking information. He heard not only that little Fadette had not come there to give birth to a child, but that her conduct there had been so spotless that not the slightest particle of blame could be attached to her. She had lived with an elderly nun of noble family, who had taken pleasure in treating her more as a companion than as a servant, so exemplary had she found her in her behavior, her manners, and her mind. She regretted her very much, and said that she was a perfect Christian, brave, economical, neat, and painstaking, and of so amiable a disposition that she should never find her like again. As this old lady was very well off, she busied herself with many charities, and little Fadette had been wonderfully useful to her in nursing the sick and preparing medicines, and had learned from her mistress several precious secrets brought from the convent before the Revolution.

Father Barbeau was well pleased, and returned to Cosse fully decided to sift the matter to the bottom. He called his family together, and commissioned his older children, his brothers, and his other relations to undertake a careful investigation of little Fadette's conduct ever since she had reached years of discretion, so that if all the ill said of her had arisen from her childish folly, he could afford to laugh at it; if, on the contrary, anybody could affirm that she had been seen to commit an evil action or to do anything indecorous, he was determined to maintain his prohibition to Landry to have anything to do with her. The investigation was conducted with all desirable prudence, and without any mention of the dowry, for he had never spoken of it, even to his wife.

During all this time little Fadette lived a very retired life in her little house, which she was unwilling to change in any particular, save that she kept it so clean that she could see her face reflected in her shabby furniture. She dressed the little Grasshopper neatly, and, without making it apparent, provided him, her godmother, and herself with wholesome food, which soon produced its effect upon the child: his health improved to a remarkable degree, and he soon became as well as could be wished. Happiness soon changed his disposition for the better, and as he was no longer threatened and scolded by his grandmother, and met with nothing but caresses, affectionate words, and kind treatment, he became a very nice little boy, full of odd and pretty fancies, incapable of exciting anybody's dislike, in spite of his lameness and his little snub nose.

The alteration in Fanchon Fadet's appearance and manners was so marked that the unkind gossip about her was forgotten, and more than one young man, on seeing her pass by with a light step and graceful carriage, wished that her mourning were at an end, so that he could pay her his court, and ask her to dance.

Sylvinet Barbeau alone was unwilling to change his opinion of her. He saw, indeed, that there was some plan on foot concerning her in the family, for Father Barbeau could not restrain himself from talking of her often, and whenever he received the refutation of some lie that had been formerly told of her, he congratulated himself on Landry's account, saying that he could not endure to have his son accused of misleading an innocent girl.

They spoke also of Landry's approaching return, and Father Barbeau was apparently anxious to obtain Father Caillaud's consent to it. At last Sylvinet saw that there would be no further opposition to Landry's love, and his sorrow returned. Public opinion, which veers with every wind, had been for some little time favorable to Fadette; nobody knew that she was rich, but she was liked, and for that very reason she was the more disliked by Sylvinet, who knew her to be his rival in Landry's affection.

From time to time, Father Barbeau allowed the word "marriage" to escape him, and said that his twins would soon be old enough to think of it.

Landry's marriage had always been a distressing idea to Sylvinet, and seemed to him the final decree of their separation. He fell ill again of his fever, and his mother consulted still other doctors.

One day she met by accident Fadette's godmother, Mother Fanchette, who, after hearing her anxious lamentations, asked her why she spent so much money, and went so far from home, when she had near at hand a woman more skilful in healing than all the others in the country, and who would not practise for money, as her grandmother had done, but only for the love of God and her neighbor. Then she named little Fadette.

Mother Barbeau mentioned it to her husband, and he made no objection. He told her that Fadette had acquired a great reputation for knowledge at Château-Meillant, and that people had come there from all sides to consult her as well as her mistress.

So Mother Barbeau begged Fadette to come and help Sylvinet, who was ill in bed.

Fanchon had more than once sought an opportunity of speaking with him, as she had promised Landry to do so, but Sylvinet had never given her the chance. She did not wait to be asked twice, but went immediately to see the poor twin. She found him in a feverish sleep, and requested the family to leave her alone with him. As the women who work cures are in the habit of pursuing their treatment in private, everybody agreed to go out of the room.

At first Fadette placed her hand on that of the twin, which was lying on the edge of the bed; but she did this so gently that he took no notice of it, although his sleep was so light that he woke with the mere buzzing of a fly. Sylvinet's hand was hot as fire, and it became still hotter while little Fadette held it in hers. He showed some agitation, but made no motion to draw away his hand. Then little Fadette laid her other hand on his forehead, as gently as before, and he became still more restless. But he calmed down little by little, and she felt the hand of her patient growing cooler from minute to minute, and saw that his sleep was as sweet as that of a little child. She stayed with him until he was about to wake, and then withdrew behind the curtain and went out of the room. As she left the house, she said to Mother Barbeau:

"Go to your boy and give him something to eat, for he has no more fever; and be sure, above all, not to speak to him of me, if you want me to cure him. I shall come back this evening, at the hour you say his disease is worse, and I shall try to break his fever again."

CHAPTER XXXIV

MOTHER BARBEAU was much astonished to find Sylvinet free from fever, and immediately brought him food, which he ate with some appetite. As the fever had not left him before for six days, and he had refused to take anything, the family were much delighted with the skill of little Fadette, who without waking him and by the sole virtue of her spells, as they thought, had already done him so much good.

When evening came, the fever rose again. Sylvinet dozed, and dreamed that he was running about the country, and was afraid of the people round him when he woke.

Fadette returned, and, as in the morning, remained alone with him for nearly an hour, using no other magic than that of holding his hands and head very gently, and breathing freshly against his hot cheek.

As in the morning, she cured him of his fever and delirium; and after she had gone away, requesting that no one should speak to Sylvinet of what she had done for him, they found him sleeping peacefully, without any flush on his face, or any further appearance of illness.

I do not know where Fadette had picked up this idea She had tried it first accidentally, and then was encouraged by experience to repeat it upon her little brother Jeanet, whom she had brought back from the point of death a dozen times by using no other remedy than that of cooling him with her hands and breath, or warming him by the same means when the high fever had changed into a chill.

She imagined that a person in good health, endowed with a certain kind of temperament and great trust in the goodness of God, could drive away disease by the power of love and will, and by the touch of a very pure and very loving hand. So, all the time that she laid her hands upon the patient, she made silent prayers to God. What she had done for her own little brother, and was now doing for Landry's brother, she would have been unwilling to try upon anybody who was less dear to her, or in whom she felt less interest: for she believed that the first virtue of this remedy was the great love she offered up in her heart to the sick person, without which God would give her no power to cure the ill.

While little Fadette was charming away Sylvinet's fever, she said in her prayer to God the same thing she had said as she soothed her brother's fever.

"O God! let my health pass from my body into this suffering body; and as the dear Jesus sacrificed his life to redeem the souls of all men, if it be thy will to deprive me of life to give it to this sick person, take it; I yield it willingly in exchange for the cure of him for whom I am praying."

Little Fadette had indeed thought of trying the efficacy of this same prayer at her grandmother's death-bed; but she had not dared, because it seemed to her that life was spent in the body and soul of the old woman through the effect of age and of that law of nature which is God's own will. So little Fadette, who, as you see, put more piety than witchcraft into her charms, feared to displease him by asking something which he grants to other Christians only by special miracle.

Whether the remedy were intrinsically sovereign or useless, it is certain that in three days she relieved Sylvinet of his fever. He would never have known the cause of his cure, if he had not waked suddenly during her last visit, and seen her bending over him, gently drawing away her hands from his.

At first he thought it was a vision, and closed his eyes to avoid seeing her; but afterward he asked his mother if Fadette had not felt his head and his pulse, or if he had dreamed it. Mother Barbeau, who had finally heard something of her husband's projects, and was anxious for Sylvinet to recover from his dislike of Fadette, answered that the girl had really come for three days, morning and evening, and had broken his fever by her secret art in a very marvelous way.

Sylvinet appeared not to believe it; he said that the fever had left him of its own accord, and that Fadette's secrets and incantations were all folly and vanity. He was so quiet and comfortable for several days that Father Barbeau thought to profit by it by saying something to him about the possibility of his brother's marriage, without mentioning the girl he had in view.

"You need not hide the name of the girl you intend to give him," answered Sylvinet. "I know very well it is that little Fadette who has charmed you all."

In fact Father Barbeau's secret investigation had turned out so favorably to little Fadette, that he hesitated no longer, and was very desirous of recalling Landry. He had nothing now to dread except Sylvinet's jealousy, and tried to cure him of his prejudice by telling him that his brother could never be happy without little Fadette. Then Sylvinet answered:

"Do as you choose, for my brother must be happy at all costs."

But no one dared take a step, because Sylvinet fell back into his fever as soon as he seemed to have given his consent.

CHAPTER XXXV

FATHER BARBEAU was afraid that little Fadette might cherish a grudge against him on account of his former injustice, and that she might console herself for Landry's absence and think of some other man. When she came to the Twinnery to take care of Sylvinet, he had tried to speak to her of Landry; but she pretended not to hear him, so that he was much embarrassed.

At last, one morning he made up his mind and went to see little Fadette.

"Fanchon Fadet," said he, "I have come to ask a question of you, which I beg you to answer truly and honestly. Before your grandmother died, had you any idea how much property she was going to leave you?"

"Yes, Father Barbeau," answered little Fadette, "I had some idea of it, because I often saw her counting out gold and silver, and I never saw her spend anything but coppers; and also because she often said to me when the other young people laughed at my rags: 'Never mind, my little girl; you will be richer than all of them, and the day will come when you can be dressed in silk from head to foot, if such is your pleasure.'"

"Then," Father Barbeau went on, "did you let Landry know, and is it possible that he pretended to be in love with you on account of your money?"

"As to that, Father Barbeau," answered little Fadette, "as it was always my whim to be loved for my fine eyes, which are the only beauty that has never been denied me, I was not so stupid as to go and tell Landry that they were tied up in eelskin purses; and yet I might have told him without danger to myself, for Landry loved me so truly and devotedly that he never cared to know whether I were rich or poor."

"And since the death of your grandmother, dear Fanchon," continued Father Barbeau, "can you give me your word of honor that Landry has not been informed of the state of the case by you or by anybody else?"

"I can," said Fadette. "As true as I love God, except myself, you are the only person in the world who knows this thing."

"And do you think, Fanchon, that Landry has still kept his love for you? And have you received any token of his good faith since your grandmother died?"

"I have received the best of all tokens," answered she; "for I confess that he came to see me three days after my grandmother's death, and that he swore to me he would either have me for his wife or die of grief."

"And what was your answer, Fadette?"

"I am not obliged to tell you, Father Barbeau; but I shall do so to please you. I answered that it was not yet time to think of marrying, and that I should not readily accept a man who paid me his court against his parents' will."

Little Fadette spoke in such a proud, indifferent tone that Father Barbeau was disturbed.

"I have no right to question you, Fanchon Fadet," said he, "and I do not know whether you mean to make my son happy or unhappy for life; but I know that he is terribly in love with you, and if I were in your place, and had your desire to be loved for myself alone, I should say to myself:

'Landry Barbeau loved me when I was in rags, when everybody spurned me, and when his parents were so unreasonable as to think his love a sin. He believed me beautiful when I was hopelessly ugly in the eyes of the rest of the world; he loved me in spite of the troubles in which his love involved him; he loved me in absence as much as when we were together; in short, he loved me so well that I cannot mistrust him, and I shall never take another for my husband.'"

"I have thought so for a long time, Father Barbeau," answered little Fadette; "but I must repeat that it would be greatly repugnant to me to enter a family which blushed to receive me, and only yielded out of weakness and pity."

"If that is all that hinders you, set yourself at ease, Fanchon," answered Father Barbeau; "for Landry's family honors you and desires to have you. Do not think that we have changed our minds because you are rich. It was not your poverty which kept us aloof, but the evil gossip spread abroad concerning you. If it were well founded, I should never consent to call you my daughter-in-law, even if it were to save Landry's life. But I was determined to know the truth of the reports; I went expressly to Château-Meillant; I informed myself minutely both there and here concerning you; and now I know that people lied against you, and that you are a good, honest girl, as Landry declared with so much fire. So, Fanchon Fadet, I come to ask you to marry my son, and if you say yes, he shall be here in a week."

This overture, which she had foreseen, made little Fadette very happy; but she was unwilling to make her joy too apparent, as she wished to be forever respected by her husband's family. She answered therefore with some circumspection; and then Father Barbeau said:

"I see, my girl, that you still bear a grudge against me and mine. Do not exact too many apologies from a man of my age; try to be satisfied with my word when I say that you shall be loved and esteemed by us all. Believe in Father Barbeau, who has never deceived anybody. Come, will you give the kiss of peace to the guardian whom you yourself selected, or to the father who longs to adopt you?"

Little Fadette could restrain herself no longer; she threw her arms round Father Barbeau's neck, and his old heart rejoiced.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE arrangements were soon made. The wedding was to take place as soon as Fanchon's mourning was over. Nothing remained except to recall Landry; but when Mother Barbeau went that evening to see Fanchon, to give her her blessing and embrace, she told how Sylvinet had again fallen ill at the news of his brother's approaching marriage, and she begged a few days' grace for the boy to recover either in health or spirits.

"You made a mistake, Mother Barbeau," said little Fadette, "to let Sylvinet know it was not a dream when he saw me at his bedside, as he roused himself from his fever. Now, his will will thwart mine, and I shall no longer have the same power to cure him while he is asleep. He may resist my influence, and my very presence may make him worse."

"I cannot believe it," answered Mother Barbeau; "for just now, as he felt ill and went to bed, he asked: 'Where is Fadette? I think she relieved me. Will she not come back any more?' I told him that I should go after you, and he seemed pleased and even impatient."

"I will come," said Fadette; "only this time I must try another course, for I assure you that the treatment which was successful while he was unaware of my presence will not operate any longer."

"Are not you going to take any drugs or remedies with you?" asked Mother Barbeau.

"No," said Fadette; "it is not his body that is sick; I must deal with his mind; I am going to try to influence it, but I cannot promise you success. What I can promise is to wait patiently for Landry's return, and not to ask you to send for him until we have done all in our power to restore his brother to health. Landry has begged me so often to help Sylvinet, that he will approve my delaying the happiness of his return."

When Sylvinet saw little Fadette at his bedside, he looked displeased, and refused to say how he was. She tried to feel his pulse, but he drew away his hand, and turned his face toward the wall. Fadette made signs to the others to leave her alone with him; and when everybody had gone, she put out the lamp, and allowed no other light to enter the room except that of the moon, which was just then at the full. Then she went back to Sylvinet's side, and said in a tone of command, which he obeyed like a child:

"Sylvinet, give me both your hands and answer me truly; for I have not put myself to this inconvenience for the sake of money, and if I took the trouble to come here to care for you, it was not to be received in this thankless way. Pay attention to what I am going to ask, and to what you are going to answer, for it will be impossible for you to deceive me."

"Ask of me what you think fit, Fadette," said the twin, quite bewildered to hear himself so severely addressed by the little madcap Fadette, whom he had often answered with a shower of stones in former days.

"Sylvain Barbeau," she went on, "I believe that you wish to die."

Sylvain hesitated a moment before replying, and then, as Fadette pressed his hand rather tightly to make him conscious of the strength of her will, he said with some confusion:

"Would not it be best for me to die, since I see that I am a trouble and burden to my family because of my ill health, and because of my—"

"Speak, Sylvain; you must conceal nothing from me."

"Because of my anxious temperament that I cannot help," answered the twin, quite overcome.

"And also because of your bad heart," said Fadette so harshly that he was still more angry and afraid.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"WHY do you accuse me of a bad heart?" said he; "you insult me when you see that I have no strength to defend myself."

"I have told you part of the truth about yourself," resumed Fadette, "and I am going to tell you still more. I have no pity for your illness, for I understand enough about it to be sure that it is not serious; and if you are in any danger, it is of being crazy, for you are doing your best to become so, without considering where your perversity and your weakness of mind are leading you."

"Upbraid me for my weakness of mind," said Sylvinet; "but as to my perversity, that is a reproach which I do not think I deserve."

"Do not try to excuse yourself," returned little Fadette; "I know you rather better than you know yourself, Sylvain; and I tell you that weakness engenders falseness of heart, and it is on that account that you are selfish and ungrateful."

"If you think so ill of me, Fanchon Fadet, my brother Landry must have spoken cruelly to you of me, and has let you see how little he cares about me; for if you know me, or think you know me, it can be only through him."

"I expected this of you, Sylvain. I was sure that you could not say a few words without complaining of your twin and finding fault with him. Your love is immoderate and ungoverned, and tends to degenerate into petulance and spite. From that I know that you are half mad, and that you are not kind. Well, I can tell you that Landry loves you ten thousand times more than you love him; and the proof is that he never finds fault with you, no matter what pain you give him, whereas you are always reproaching him, although he does nothing but yield to you and wait upon you. How do you expect me not to see the difference between him and you? So the more kindly Landry spoke of you, the more ill I thought of you; for I reflected that no just person could misunderstand so good a brother."

"So you hate me, Fadette? I did not deceive myself, then, for I knew that you stole my brother's love from me by insinuations against me."

"There you are again, Master Sylvain; and I am glad that you lay the blame on me at last. Very well, I reply that your heart is hard, and that you are a liar, since you wilfully misunderstand and insult a girl who has always served you and taken your part, although she knew that you were inimical to her; a girl who has deprived herself a hundred times of the greatest and only pleasure she had in the world,—the pleasure of seeing Landry and being with him,—so that she might send Landry to you and let you enjoy the happiness she renounced herself. And yet I owed you nothing. You have always been my enemy, and as far back as I can remember, I never met a boy so haughty and unfeeling as you were to me. I could have taken my revenge, for there has been no lack of opportunity. If I have not done so, and if I have returned you good for evil without your knowledge, it is because I firmly believe it to be my duty as a Christian to forgive my neighbor in order to do what is pleasing in the sight of God. But when I speak to you of God, you probably do not understand me, for you are an enemy to him and to your own salvation."

"I allow you to say a great many things, Fadette ; but it is a little too much for you to accuse me of being a heathen."

"Did not you say, just now, that you longed for death ? And do you think that is a Christian desire ?"

"I did not say that, Fadette. I said — "

Sylvinet stopped, frightened by the remembrance of his own words, which seemed impious to him in the light of Fadette's expostulations.

She did not leave off, but continued to remonstrate with him.

"It may be," said she, "that your expression was more reprehensible than your thought ; for I am firmly convinced that you are not so desirous of dying as you like to make others think, in order that you may make yourself master at home, and may torment your poor unhappy mother and your twin, who is simple enough to believe that you want to put an end to your days. I am not your dupe, Sylvain. I believe that you are as much afraid of death as anybody else, and even more so ; and that you are amusing yourself by terrifying those who are fond of you. You like to see that the wisest and most necessary resolutions always give way before your threats of suicide ; and it is indeed very convenient and pleasant to have but to say a word to make everybody bow before you. In this way, you rule all your family. But as this is contrary to nature, and as you succeed only by means which God disapproves, he punishes you by making you still more wretched than you would be if you obeyed instead of commanding. This is the reason that you are tired of a life which has been made too easy for you. I am going to tell you what was needed to make you a good and well-behaved boy, Sylvain. You should have had very harsh parents, much poverty, many days without bread, and frequent blows. If you had been brought up in the same school as I and my brother Jeanet, instead of being ungrateful, you would be thankful for the least kindness. Now, Sylvain, do not urge the plea that you are a twin. I know you have often heard that the love of twins for each other is a law of nature, which would cause your death if it were crossed, and you thought you were only acquiescing in your destiny by carrying this love to excess; but God is not so unjust as to mark us out for an evil destiny before we are born. He is not so cruel as to endow us with ideas which we cannot overcome, and it is insolence to be so superstitious as to believe that there are in your blood more power and evil destiny than resistance and reason in your mind. Unless you are crazy, I shall never believe that you are not able to fight against your jealousy if you wish. But you do not wish, because your fault has been indulged, and you think less of your duty than of your caprice."

Sylvinet answered nothing, and little Fadette continued for a long time to upbraid him without mercy. He knew that she was right in the main, and that only in one point was she too severe, and that was in taking for granted that he had never striven against his evil nature, and that he had been fully aware of his selfishness; whereas he had been selfish without either intending or knowing it. He was much pained and humiliated, and would have been glad to give her a better idea of his conscience. Fadette knew that she exaggerated; but she did it purposely, so as to buffet him thoroughly in spirit before visiting him with the sweetness of consolation. She exerted herself to speak harshly, and to feign anger, and all the while she felt so much love and pity for him in her heart that her pretense made her well-nigh sick, and she left him more wearied than he was.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE truth is that Sylvinet was not half so ill as he seemed, and as he liked to believe. Little Fadette had perceived immediately on feeling his pulse that his fever was not high, and that if he were slightly delirious, it was because his mind was more diseased than his body. So she thought she should set to work on his mind by making him afraid of her, and at daylight she returned to him. He had not slept, but was quiet and apparently exhausted. As soon as he saw her he stretched out his hand, instead of pulling it away as he had done the night before.

"Why do you offer to shake hands with me, Sylvain?" she asked; "is it so that I may ascertain whether you still have fever? I see by your face that you have none."

Sylvinet was much embarrassed at being obliged to draw back the hand which she had been unwilling to touch, and said:

"It was to bid you good-morning, Fadette, and to thank you for all the trouble you take in my behalf."

"If that is what you mean, I accept your good-morning," said she, taking his hand and keeping it in hers; "for I never refuse a courtesy, and I do not think you are so untrue as to show an interest in me which you do not feel, to some degree."

Although Sylvinet was quite wide-awake, he experienced a great sense of comfort in having Fadette hold his hand, and he said very softly:

"And yet you treated me very badly, yesterday evening, Fanchon, and I do not know how it is that I am not provoked with you. I am very thankful to you for coming to see me in spite of all the grievances you have against me."

Fadette sat down at his bedside, and began to talk to him in an entirely new way; she was so kind, so sweet, and so tender that Sylvinet's relief and pleasure were the greater for having believed her incensed with him. He wept much, confessed his faults, and even requested her forgiveness and friendship so prettily and winningly that it was easy for her to see his heart was better than his head. She let him pour himself out, though she still occasionally scolded him, and whenever she tried to take away her hand, he insisted upon keeping it in his, because he thought it cured his sickness and his sorrow at the same time.

When she saw that he had reached the point she wished, she said:

"I am going out; and you must get up, Sylvain, for you have no more fever, and you must not stay here coddling yourself, while your mother tires herself out waiting on you, and wastes her time in your room. You must eat what your mother brings you, in accordance with my directions. She will give you meat, though I know you say it disgusts you, and live only on messes of herbs. But never mind, you must make an effort, and even if you do feel repugnance, you must not show it. It will please your mother to see you eating solid food; and if you succeed in overcoming your distaste the first time, you will feel less the second time, and none the third. See if I am not right. Good-by, and do not let them call me so soon again, for I know that you need not be ill unless you wish."

"Shall you not come back this evening?" asked Sylvinet. "I thought you were coming back."

"I do not practise for money, Sylvain, and I have something else to do besides taking care of you, when you are not ill."

"You are right, Fadette; but you think my wish to see you is all selfishness: it is not so, for it relieves me to talk with you."

"Very well, you are no longer weak, and you know where I live. You are aware that I am going to be your sister by marriage as I am already by the affection I feel for you; so you may come to see me without incurring any blame."

"I shall come, since you allow me," said Sylvinet. "Good-by, then, Fadette; I am going to get up, although I have a bad headache from lying awake and worrying all night."

"I will try to take away your headache," said she; "but it must be your last, and remember that I order you to sleep well to-night."

She laid her hand on his forehead, and at the end of five minutes he was so much soothed and refreshed that he no longer felt any pain.

"I see," said he, "that I was wrong to refuse your aid, Fadette; for you have a great gift for healing, and can charm sickness away. The others made me worse with their drugs, and you cure me with a touch; I think that if I could be always with you, you would keep me from all illness and error. But, tell me, Fadette, are you no longer angry with me? And do you rely on the promise of entire obedience I made you?"

"I do rely on it," said she, "and unless you change your mind, I shall love you as if you were my twin."

"If you really meant what you say, Fanchon, you would be less formal with me, as twins do not use so much ceremony toward each other."

"Very well, Sylvain, get up, eat, talk, and sleep," said she, rising. "This is my prescription for to-day. To-morrow you must set to work."

"And I shall go to see you," said Sylvinet.

"Yes," said she, and as she went, she looked at him with so much affection and indulgence that he was filled with a sudden desire and energy to rise from his bed of sickness and sloth.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MOTHER BARBEAU was amazed at little Fadette's skill, and that evening she said to her husband:

"Sylvinet is better to-day than he has been for six months; he ate all I brought him to-day, without making faces as usual, and the strangest thing of all is that he speaks of little Fadette as if she were an angel. There is no praise he has not given her, and he is most anxious for his brother's return and marriage. It is like a miracle, and I do not know whether I am asleep or awake."

"Miracle or no miracle," said Father Barbeau, "the girl is very clever, and I think she will bring good luck to the family."

Sylvinet left three days afterward to go to his brother at Arton. He had asked his father and Fadette to give him the great reward of being the first to bring Landry word of his happiness.

"All joys come to me at once," cried Landry, half fainting with happiness in his twin's arms, "since you come to bring me home, and seem as pleased as I myself."

They returned together without loitering by the way, as may be easily believed, and never were people happier than the family at the Twinnery, when they sat down to supper with Fadette and little Jeanet at the table.

Life was very sweet to all of them for the next six months. Little Nanette was betrothed to Cadet Caillaud, Landry's best friend, next to the members of his own family, and it was decided that the two weddings should take place at the same time. Sylvinet's fondness for Fadette was so great that he would do nothing without her advice, and her power over him was as great as if she were really his sister. If it still sometimes happened that he looked melancholy and was lost in reverie, Fadette had only to reprove him to make him smile and talk again.

The two pairs were married on the same day, at the same mass, and as there was no lack of money, the wedding was so gay that Father Caillaud, who had never in his life before failed in sobriety, looked a little tipsy on the third day. Nothing dampened the joy of Landry and his family, and I may even say of the whole neighborhood; for Father Barbeau and Father Caillaud, who were rich, and Fadette, who was richer than both of them put together, showed hospitality, to all and gave away much in charity. Fanchon's good heart prompted her to return good for evil to all those who had once thought ill of her. Later, too, after Landry had bought a fine farm, in the management of which he and his wife were most skilful and successful, she had a comfortable house built for the purpose of gathering together all the unfortunate children of the parish, during four hours of every week-day, and she herself and her brother Jeanet took the pains to educate them, to teach them true religion, and even to relieve the needs of the poorest among them. She remembered that she had been a forlorn and unhappy child, and her own beautiful children were early trained to kindness and sympathy toward those who were neither rich nor petted.

What became of Sylvinet in the midst of all this happiness? Something that no one could understand, and that puzzled Father Barbeau very much.

About a month after his brother and sister were married, as his father was urging him to take a wife, he answered that he had no taste for marriage, but that he had had for some time a wish which he was desirous of gratifying, and that it was to enlist as a soldier.

As boys are none too numerous in the families of our part of the country, and all hands are needed there for the cultivation of the land, it is extremely rare for anybody to volunteer. So Sylvinet's decision caused great surprise, especially as he could give no reason for it except his own caprice and a military ardor of which he had never been suspected. All that his father, mother, brothers and sisters, and even Landry, could say was powerless to dissuade him, and they were obliged to tell Fanchon, who had the best head and gave the best advice in the family.

She talked for more than two hours with Sylvinet, and after they had parted, it was seen that both Sylvinet and his sister-in-law had been weeping; but they looked so quiet and resolute that there was no more use in raising objections when Sylvinet said that he persisted in his desire, and Fanchon that she approved his resolution, and expected him to reap great advantage from it in time to come.

As they could not be sure that she had not more knowledge on the subject than she would allow, no one dared offer further opposition, and Mother Barbeau herself gave in, after shedding many tears. Landry was in despair, but his wife said :

"It is God's will, and the duty of all of us to let Sylvain go. Believe me, I know what I say, and please ask me no more questions."

Landry accompanied his brother as far as he could, and when he returned him his bundle, which he had been carrying on his own shoulders, he felt as if he had given away part of his heart. He went home to his beloved wife, who was obliged to nurse him during a full month, as his sorrow made him really ill.

Sylvain was not ill, and continued his route to the frontier ; for it was in the time of the great and splendid wars of the emperor Napoleon. Though he had never had the slightest taste for the army, he mastered his own inclinations so perfectly that he was soon distinguished as a good soldier, brave in battle as a man who seeks for death, and yet, while subjecting his body to the austerities of the ancients, he was gentle and submissive to discipline as a child. As his education was sufficient to admit of promotion, he obtained it, and, after ten years of fatigue, courage, and noble conduct, he became captain, and was decorated into the bargain.

"Ah! If he could only come back at last!" said Mother Barbeau to her husband the evening of the day on which they had received a delightful letter from him, full of love for them, Landry, Fanchon, and all the family. "He is almost a general, and it is quite time for him to take a rest."

"His rank is important enough, without exaggerating it," said Father Barbeau, "and it is a great honor for a peasant's family."

"Fadette predicted it," said Mother Barbeau, "You know she told us beforehand."

"No matter," returned Father Barbeau, "I shall never be able to understand how his taste turned in this direction, and how his character changed so much, for he used to be quiet and self-indulgent."

"My dear," said the mother, "our daughter-in-law knows more about it than she will tell; but nobody can deceive such a fond mother as I am, and I think I know as much as our Fadette."

"I think you might tell me now," said Father Barbeau.

"Very well," answered Mother Barbeau, "our Fanchon is too much of an enchantress, and she bewitched Sylvinet more than she meant. When she found that the charm was working too powerfully, she tried to restrain and lessen it, but she could not; and when our Sylvain saw that he thought too much of his brother's wife, he went away in all honor and virtue, sustained and approved by Fanchon."

"If that is true," said Father Barbeau, scratching his ear, "I am afraid he will never marry, for the nurse of Clavières said long ago that when he once fell in love, he would forget his infatuation about his brother; but that he would never love but one woman in his life, because of his too tender and too passionate heart."